

**Realist Agency in the Art Field of Twentieth-Century  
China – Realism in the Art and Writing of  
Xu Beihong (1895-1953)**

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School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London**

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# **Realist Agency in the Art Field of Twentieth-Century China**

## **– Realism in the Art and Writing of Xu Beihong (1895-1953)**

### **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the spread of the neologism *xieshi zhuyi*, the Chinese equivalent of ‘realism’, in China in the early twentieth century through a case study of Xu Beihong. He is an indispensable figure in modern Chinese art, with his eminent status as a devotee of realism in art in particular being widely recognised.

His dedication to realism in the twentieth century brings a dichotomy to his historical reputation, either as a beacon of modern Chinese art, or a conservative painter. To resolve this controversy, which results from the focus that scholarship so far has placed on ‘what his realistic attainments are’, this thesis explores ‘how’ Xu Beihong became such a prominent figure in China’s art world, largely through his perception, translation and appropriation of Western realism. This perspective replaces the colonial perspective, which views twentieth-century Chinese art as a passive and belated modernity modelled on that of the West, with one grounded in postmodernism, which turns its emphasis instead to China’s actively Occidental construction of the West.

This thesis also studies the promulgation of the English term ‘fine art’, which underlies the formation of the art field in China. The appearance of such neologisms as ‘realism’ and ‘fine art’ points to a large-scale transplant of a Western framework of knowledge into China, to replace the Confucian traditions seen as obsolete after the collapse of imperial rule in 1911. Through examining the realist agency of Xu Beihong, this thesis will disclose the conflicted nature of China’s art field, in which institutions, tastes and agencies are brought into play. Moreover, the diversity of the art field will in turn provide a perspective on the position-taking implied by Xu Beihong’s adherence to realism. Consequently, this thesis aims to appreciate Xu Beihong’s achievements beyond the simple dichotomy of modern Westernisation vs. conservatism.

## Acknowledgements

I once came across a very interesting analogy between *The Lord of the Rings* and PhD study. One day, a nobody such as me was given a ring (a PhD offer letter) and was told that it possessed great power (such as the power of knowledge and the social prestige which comes with a PhD degree). I then started a several-year-long adventure, and throughout the whole journey what concerned me most was how to get rid of this ring! When I finally approached the destination, I felt deeply reluctant to say farewell to it (actually, it was because my PhD dissertation was not good enough to hand in). After having fulfilled this heroic mission by breaking away from the ring/PhD programme, I, well, did not feel any big changes or success in my life. What I wanted to do, then, was to have a sound sleep, just like Frodo Baggins did in the movie. Maybe this analogy over-exaggeratedly glorifies PhD study. Perhaps only those who have undergone studying for a PhD would understand this complex mixture of difficulties, accomplishments, stress, depression and enjoyment during the study, which lastly does turn into a great source of strength, supporting us to go further in our future journey.

During my PhD journey, I have been greatly indebted to Professor Craig Clunas; his incredible patience, Gandalf-like wisdom and generous support have been undeniably instrumental in my academic growth.

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Lastly, thanks also go to the British weather for arousing my studious potential, because it ensured that the threat of sunburn and the outdoor pursuits never distracted me from my studies.

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Published in Liu Jiuan *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo huihua quanji* (Beijing, 1997-), Vol. XXVII,

plate 180.

Figure 64

Lang Shining

'White Hawk and Glossy Ganoderma' (*Songxian yingzhi tu* 嵩獻英芝圖), 1724

Ink and colour on silk; 242.3 x 157.1 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Published in Liu Jiuan *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo huibhua quanji* (Beijing, 1997-), Vol. XXVII, plate 172.

Figure 65

Xu Beihong

'Tiger' (*Hu tu* 虎圖), 1918

Ink and colour on paper; 90.4 x 43.6 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Published in *Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxiandai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong* (2006), p. 25

Figure 66

Gao Qifeng (高奇峰, 1888-1933)

'Roaring Tiger' (*Xiaohu* 嘯虎), 1908

Ink and colour on paper; Size: uncited; *Heshi Zhile luo* 何氏至樂樓 Collection

Published in Fong, Wen C. *Between Two Cultures* (2001), p. 87.

Figure 67

Gao Jianfu (高劍父, 1879-1951)

'Flying in the Rain' (*Yuzhong feixing* 雨中飛行), 1932

Ink and colour on paper; 46 x 35.5 cm;

Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Published in Kao Mayching M. ed. *Lingnan sangao huayi* (1995), plate 29.

Figure 68

Zheng Mantuo and Gao Jianfu (inscription)

'Silver Bank and Autumn Water' (*Yintang qiushui* 銀塘秋水), 1914

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in Laing, Ellen Johnston. *Selling Happiness* (2004), plate 10.

Figure 69

Jin Guisheng (金桂生)

'Chrysanthemum-Picking in the Xu Garden' (*Xuyuan caiju tu* 徐園採菊圖)

Illustration for the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* 點石齋畫報 15.3 (1890)

Published in Kuo, Jason C. ed. *Visual Culture in Shanghai 1850s-1930s* (2007), p. 106.

Figure 70

Xu Beihong

'Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers' (*Tiannü sanhua* 天女散花), 1918

Watercolour on paper; 95 x 53cm; Mei Lanfang Memorial Museum

Published in Liu Zhanwen *et al.* eds. *Mei Lanfang canghuaqi* (1998), p. 73.

Figure 71

Poster of Mei Lanfang in the role of 'Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers'

Published in Mei Shaowu and Mei Weidong eds. *Mei Lanfang zishu* (2005), p. 120.

Figure 72

Xu Beihong

'Farewell My Concubine' (*Bawang bieji* 霸王別姬), 1931

Oils on canvas; 46 x 58 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 181.

Figure 73

Image of Cangjie (*Cangjie xiang* 倉頡像)

Published in *Yishu congbian* 藝術叢編, 1 (1916).

Figure 74

Image of Cangjie (*Cangjie xiang* 倉頡像)

Published in *Shenbao* 申報, 25 October 1917.

Figure 75

Yi Yuanji (易元吉, ca 11<sup>th</sup> century)

'Monkey and Cat' (*Hou mao tu* 猴貓圖), undated

Ink and colour on silk; 31.9 x 57.2 cm; Taipei Palace Museum

Published in *Gugong shuhua tulu* (1989-), Vol. XV, pp. 243-246.

Figure 76

Su Hanchen (蘇漢臣, ca 12<sup>th</sup> century)

'Children Playing in the Autumn Garden' (*Qiuting yingxi tu* 秋庭嬰戲圖), undated

Ink and colour on silk; 197.5 x 108.7 cm; Taipei Palace Museum

Published in *Gugong shuhua tulu* (1989-), Vol. II, p. 67.

Figure 77

Lin Zhuang (林椿)

'Fruit and Bird' (*Guoshou lai qin tu* 果熟來禽圖), undated

Ink and colour on silk; 26.5 x 27 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Published in Liu Jiuan *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo huihua quanji* (Beijing, 1997-), Vol. IV, plate 19.

Figure 78

Xu Beihong

'Old Pines and Cypressess in the Western Hills' (*Xishan gu songbo* 西山古松柏), 1918

Ink and colour on paper; 85 x 51cm, Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 235.

Figure 79

Xu Beihong

'Fighting with a Lion' (*Boshi tu* 搏獅圖), 1910s

Watercolour; Size and location: uncited

Published in *Huixue zazhi* 繪學雜誌, 1 (1920).

Figure 80

Xu Beihong

'Slave and Lion' (*Nuli yu shi* 奴隸與獅), 1924

Oil on canvas; 122.3 x 152.8 cm; Private collection

Sold at Christie's auction in Hong Kong on 26 November 2006

Published in *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang* (2008), p. 178.

Figure 81

Chen Shizeng (陳師曾, 1876-1923)

'Studying Painting' (*Duhua tu* 讀畫圖), 1917

Ink and colour on paper; 87.7 x 46.6 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Shown on <http://www.dpm.org.cn/China/phoweb/Relicpage/15/R7307.htm>

Figure 82

Li Yishi (李毅士, 1881-1942)

'Zhang Chang Helping His Wife to Draw Eyebrows'

(*Zhang Chang huamei* 張敞畫眉), undated

Watercolour; Size and location: uncited

Published in *Huixue zazhi* 繪學雜誌, 1 (1920).



Figure 83

Lai Jigeng (來季賡)

'Landscape of the Western Hills' (*Xishan fengjing xiesheng* 西山風景寫生), ca 1918

Watercolour; Size and location: uncited

Published in *Huixue zazhi* 繪學雜誌, 1 (1920).

Figure 84

He Lüzhi (賀履之, 1861-1938)

'Mountain-Water' (*Shanshui* 山水), 1918

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in *Huixue zazhi* 繪學雜誌, 1 (1920).

Figure 85

Wang Hui (王翬, 1632-1717)

'Fishing Boat in Peach Blossom' (*Taohua yuting* 桃花漁艇), undated

Ink and colour on paper; 28.5 x 43 cm; Taipei Palace Museum

Shown on

[http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/collection/selections\\_02.htm?docno=82&catno=15&pageno=5&geno=5](http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/collection/selections_02.htm?docno=82&catno=15&pageno=5&geno=5)

Figure 86

Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran (1837-1917)

'The Convalescent' (*Le Convalescent*), ca 1860

Oil on canvas; 99 x 126 cm; Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, Grenoble

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *The Realist Tradition* (1980), plate 142.

Figure 87

François Flameng (1856-1923)

'Madame Flameng' (*Madame Flameng*), 1893

Oil on canvas; 40 x 33 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=)

Figure 88

Lin Fengmian (林風眠, 1900-1991)

'Humanity's Pain' (*Renlei de tongku* 人類的痛苦), 1929

Medium, size and location: lost

Published in Andrews, Julia F. and Shen Kuiyi eds. *A Century in Crisis* (1998), p. 47.

Figure 89

Xu Beihong

'Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers'

(*Tian Heng yu wubai zhuangshi* 田橫與五百壯士), 1928-1930

Oil on canvas; 197 x 349 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, pp. 168-169.

Figure 90

Xu Beihong

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1925

Charcoal drawing; 35 x 47 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Lin Shuxin *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1994), p. 62

Figure 91

Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904)

'The Death of Caesar', ca 1859-1867

Oil on canvas; 85.5 x 145.5 cm; The Walters Art Museum

Shown on <http://art.thewalters.org/viewwoa.aspx?id=17030>

Figure 92

Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929)

'Horses at the Watering Trough', 1884

Oil on canvas; 222 x 173cm; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Chambéry

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Against the Modern* (2002), p. 70.

Figure 93

Preparatory photograph for *Horses at the Watering Trough*, ca 1884

Archives Départementales de la Haute-Saône, Vesoul

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Against the Modern* (2002), p. 71.

Figure 94

Xu Beihong

'Drawing of Horse' (*Ma* 馬), 1940

Charcoal drawing; 17 x 12 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 32.

Figure 95

Diego Velázquez (1599-1660)

'The Toilet of Venus', 1647-1651

Oil on canvas; 122.5 x 177 cm; National Gallery, London

Shown on

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/work?workNumber=ng2057>

Figure 96

Xu Beihong

'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes after Raphael', 1933

Oil on canvas; 70 x 97 cm; Location: uncited

Published in *Fine Modern Chinese Oil Paintings, Watercolors and Sculpture*, Sotheby's auction catalogue (Taipei: 18 October 1992), plate 17.

Figure 97

Raphael (1483-1520)

'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes', 1515-1516

Watercolour; Size: uncited; Victoria and Albert Museum

Shown on <http://www.vam.ac.uk/images/image/10037-popup.html>

Figure 98

Photograph of Xu Beihong and Jiang Biwei, ca 1923

Published in Chen Yanfeng. *Chang Yu* (1995), p. 15.

Figure 99

Chang Yu (also known as San Yu 常玉, 1900-1966)

'Female Nudes in Pink' (*Fenhongse shuang luonü* 粉紅色雙裸女), ca 1928

Oil; 73 x 50 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Chen Yanfeng. *Chang Yu* (1995), p. 70.

Figure 100

Xu Beihong

'Lions' (*Xunshi tu* 馴獅圖), ca 1922

Charcoal drawing; 60 x 43.8 cm; Private collection

Published in Andrews, Julia F. and Shen Kuiyi eds. *A Century in Crisis* (1998), p. 106.

Figure 101

Chang Yu

'Peony' (*Mudan* 牡丹), 1921

Ink and colour on paper; 60 x 43.8 cm; Private collection

Published in Chen Yanfeng. *Chang Yu* (1995), p. 57.

Figure 102

Xu Beihong

'Drawing of Shao Xunmei 邵洵美', 1925

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in Lin Qi. *Haishang caizi Shao Xunmei zhuan* (2002).

Figure 103

Xu Beihong

'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1921

Charcoal drawing; 48 x 31.8 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 96.

Figure 104

Xu Beihong

'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1922

Charcoal drawing; 47 x 30 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 97.

Figure 105

Xu Beihong

'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 50 x 32.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 119.

Figure 106

Xu Beihong

'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 50 x 32.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 109.

Figure 107

Xu Beihong

'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1926

Charcoal drawing; 38.2 x 27 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. IV, plate 2.

Figure 108

Paul Richer (1849-1933)

Photograph of 'Male Morphology'

Published in Callen, Anthea. 'The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, 20.1 (1997), p.46.

Figure 109

Paul Richer

Photograph of 'Female Morphology'

Published in Callen, Anthea. 'The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, 20.1(1997), p. 50.

Figure 110

Paul Richer

Photograph of 'Female Morphology'

Published in Callen, Anthea. 'The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, 20.1(1997), p. 51.

Figure 111

Xu Beihong

'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1920s

Charcoal drawing; 27.5 x 45 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. IV, plate 8.

Figure 112

Xu Beihong

'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 50 x 32.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. III, plate 45.

Figure 113

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 48.3 x 31.4 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 106.

Figure 114

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 50 x 32.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 107.

Figure 115

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Charcoal drawing; 50.2 x 32.6 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 122.

Figure 116

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1920s

Charcoal drawing; 32 x 25.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. III, plate 83.

Figure 117

Léon-Augustin L'Hermitte (1844-1925)

'Paying the Harvesters' (*La Paye des Moissonneurs*), 1882

Oil on canvas; 215 x 272 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Beyond Impressionism* (1992), p. 19.

Figure 118

Albert Besnard (1849-1934)

'Peace through Arbitration' (*La Paix par l'Arbitrage*), 1912

Oil on canvas; 117 x 82 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=)

Figure 119

Clémentine-Hélène Dufau (1869-1937)

'Portrait of the Artist' (*Portrait de l'Artiste*), 1911

Oil on canvas; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&zsz=5&lnum=)

Figure 120

Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884)

'Potato Gatherers' (*Saison d'Octobre: Récolte des Pommes de Terre*), 1879

Oil on canvas; 180.7 x 196 cm; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Beyond Impressionism* (1992), p. 27.

Figure 121

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917)

'The Burghers of Calais' (*Les Bourgeois de Calais*), ca 1889

Image published in Lampert, Catherine *et al.* eds. *Rodin* (2006-2007), p. 107.

Figure 122

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898)

'The Poor Fisherman' (*Le Pauvre Pêcheur*), 1881

Oil on Canvas; 155.5 x 192.5 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/index.php?id=851&L=1&tx\\_commentaire\\_pi1\[showUId\]=373&no\\_cache=1](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/index.php?id=851&L=1&tx_commentaire_pi1[showUId]=373&no_cache=1)

Figure 123

Dagnan-Bouveret

'Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus', 1896-1897

Oil on canvas; 198.1 x 280.7 cm; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Against the Modern* (2002), p. 111.

Figure 124

Photographs of Anne-Marie and Jean Dagnan-Bouveret, ca 1896

Preparatory photographs for *Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus*

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Against the Modern* (2002), p. 113.

Figure 125

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)

'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose', 1885-1886

Oil on canvas; 174 x 153.7 cm; Tate Britain

Shown on

<http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=13109&searchid=9268>

Figure 126

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)

'The Meeting' (*Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*), 1854

Oil on canvas; 132 x 150.5 cm; Musée Fabre, Montpellier

Published in Nochlin, Linda. *Realism* (1990), p. 16.

Figure 127

Gustave Courbet

'The Spring' (*La Source*), 1868

Oil on canvas; 128 x 97 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&nu mid=926](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&nu mid=926)

Figure 128

Édouard Manet (1832-1883)

'Olympia', 1863

Oil on canvas; 130 x 190 cm; Musée d'Orsay

Shown on

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&nu mid=712](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&nu mid=712)

Figure 129

Titian (1488-1576)

'Venus of Urbino', 1538

Oil on canvas; 119 x 165 cm; Uffizi Gallery

Shown on [http://www.virtualuffizi.com/uffizi1/Uffizi\\_Pictures.asp?Contatore=296](http://www.virtualuffizi.com/uffizi1/Uffizi_Pictures.asp?Contatore=296)

Figure 130

News about Xu Beihong in *Shibao* 時報 on 3 March 1926.

Figure 131

Xu Beihong

'Rooster'

Design for the letterhead of the *Modeng* (摩登) supplement of the *Central Daily* newspaper (中央日報).

Picture taken from *Modeng*, 2 February 1928

Figure 132

Ni Yide (倪貽德, 1901-1970)

'Dock' (*Matou* 碼頭), 1929

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in Lin Xingyue. *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi* (2002), p. 115.



Figure 133

Feng Zikai (豐子愷, 1898-1975)

'Reading by the Window', ca 1940

Ink and colour on paper; 48.3 x 33 cm; Robert H. Ellsworth Collection

Published in Fong, Wen C. *Between Two Cultures* (2001), p. 126.

Figure 134

Xu Beihong

'Honeymoon' (*Miyue* 蜜月), 1925

Oil on canvas; 93 x 118 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, pp. 152-153.

Figure 135

Xu Beihong

'Portrait of Jiang Biwei' (*Jiang Biwei zhenying* 蔣碧薇真影), 1925

Oil on canvas; 73 x 59cm; Location: uncited

Published in Shi Shuqing ed. *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* (2005), p. 165.

Figure 136

Xu Beihong

'Petting the Cat' (*Fumao* 撫貓), 1924

Oil on canvas; 65 x 53 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 145.

Figure 137

(Left) Photograph of Xu Beihong with his oil portrait of Kang Youwei

Published in *Shibao Pictorial* 時報圖畫 on 28 March 1926

(Right) Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Kang Youwei', 1920s

Oil on panel, 47 x 56 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Shi Shuqing ed. *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* (2005), p. 171.

Figure 138

Xu Beihong

'Portrait of Ren Bonian' (*Ren Bonian xiang* 任伯年像), 1927

Oil on canvas; 51 x 39 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 161.

Figure 139

Xu Beihong

'Portrait of Poet Chen Sanyuan' (*Shiren Chen Sanyuan xiang* 詩人陳散原像),  
1927-1930

Oil on panel; 73 x 60 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 164.

Figure 140

Xu Beihong

'Portrait of Poet Chen Sanyuan' (*Sanyuan qianbei shiren* 散原前輩詩人), 1928

Charcoal drawing; 48 x 32 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 7

Figure 141

Photograph of 'Painter Xu Beihong'

Published in *Shibao Pictorial* 時報圖畫 on 7 March 1926.

Figure 142

Wu Changshuo (吳昌碩, 1844-1927)

'Spring Offerings', 1919

Ink and colour on paper; 145.7 x 79.4 cm; The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Published in Fong, Wen C. *Between Two Cultures* (2001), p. 59.

Figure 143

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)

'Pastoral' (*Pastorale*), 1870

Oil on canvas; 65 x 81 cm;

Shown on Musée d'Orsay

[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no\\_cache=1&nnu mid=001306&cHash=6103477e78](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&nnu mid=001306&cHash=6103477e78)

Figure 144

Pan Yuliang (潘玉良, 1895-1977)

'Looking at My Refection in the Mirror' (*Guying* 顧影), undated

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in *Funü* magazine 婦女雜誌, 15.7 (1929).

Figure 145

Li Yishi

'Representation of the Song of Everlasting Sorrow' (*Changhenge huayi* 長恨歌畫意),

1929

Watercolour on paper; 22.5 x 17 cm; National Art Museum of China

Shown on [http://www.namoc.org/msg/cp/cpjx/200812/t20081216\\_47873.html](http://www.namoc.org/msg/cp/cpjx/200812/t20081216_47873.html)

Figure 146

Yorozu Tetsugoro (萬鐵五郎, 1885-1927)

'Nude (Resting Her Chin on Her Hand)' (*Rahu* 裸婦), 1926

Oil on canvas; 117 x 80 cm; The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Shown on <http://search.artmuseums.go.jp/records.php?sakuhin=4249>

Figure 147

Liu Haisu (劉海粟, 1896-1994)

'The Qingliang Tableland in Yellow Mountain'

(*Huangshan Qingliangtai* 黃山清涼台), 1954

Oil painting; 60.2 x 82 cm; Liu Haisu Museum

Shown on [http://www.lhs-arts.org/cangpin\\_view.asp?id=33](http://www.lhs-arts.org/cangpin_view.asp?id=33)

Figure 148

Shi Tao (石濤, 1642-1708)

'Clouds and Mountains' (*Yunshan tu* 雲山圖), undated

Ink and colour on paper; 45.1 x 30.8 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Shown on <http://www.dpm.org.cn/China/phoweb/Relicpage/16/R7886.htm>

Figure 149

Anders Zorn (1860-1920)

'Our Daily Bread' (*Vart Dagliga Brod*), 1886

Watercolour; 68 x 102 cm; Private collection

Shown on [http://www.anderszorn.org/Vart-Dagliga-Brod-\(Our-daily-bread\).html](http://www.anderszorn.org/Vart-Dagliga-Brod-(Our-daily-bread).html)

Figure 150

Wu Dayu (吳大羽, 1903-1988)

'Girl' (*Nühai* 女孩), 1920s

Oil on canvas; Size and location: uncited

Shown on <http://www.yixingart.com/wudayu/3-008.htm>

Figure 151

Cai Weilian (蔡威廉, 1904-1939)

'Self-Portrait' (*Ziji xiezhao* 自己寫照), 1920s

Medium, size and location: uncited

Published in *Funü* magazine 婦女雜誌, 15.7 (1929).

Figure 152

Xi Beihong

'Playing Flute' (*Xiaosheng* 蕭聲), 1926

Oil on canvas ; 80 x 39cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 156.

Figure 153

Xu Beihong

'Portrait of Zhang Ji' (*Zhangji xiang* 張繼像), 1928

Oil on panel; 56 x 69 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 166.

Figure 154

Ding Yanyong (丁衍庸, 1902-1978)

'Naked Woman Holding a Lute' (*Baoqin de nürenti* 抱琴的女人體), 1943

Oil on canvas; 55 x 46 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Lin Xingyue. *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi* (2002), p. 120.

Figure 155

Pang Xunqin (龐薰琹, 1906-1985)

'Life's Riddle' (*Rensheng de yami* 人生的啞謎), 1931

Oil on canvas; Size and location: uncited

Published in Lin Xingyue. *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi* (2002), p. 114.

Figure 156

Xu Beihong

'Awaiting the Deliverer' (*Xiwohou* 俟我后), 1930-1933

Oil on canvas; 230 x 318 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, pp. 174-175.

Figure 157

Xu Beihong

'Poetic Expression of People in the Six Periods' (*Liuchaoren shiyi tu* 六朝人詩意圖), 1939

Ink and colour on paper; 102.5 x 206.2 cm;

Yang Yingfa (楊應法) and Yang Yingqun (楊應群) Collection in Singapore

Published in *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang* (2008), pp. 218-219.

Figure 158

Xu Beihong

'Shu Liang He' (叔梁紇), 1931

Oil painting; 71 x 42 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 178.

Figure 159

Xu Beihong

'The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain' (*Yugong yishan* 愚公移山), 1940

Oil on canvas; 46 x 106.5 cm; Location: uncited

Published in *Sotheby's Contemporary Chinese Art: Part I*, auction catalogue (Hong Kong: 7 April 2007), p. 77.

Figure 160

Xu Beihong

'The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain' (*Yugong yishan* 愚公移山), 1940

Ink and colour on paper; 144 x 421 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang* (2008), pp. 308-309.

Figure 161

Xu Beihong

'The Heroine Jing Thirteen' (*Jing Shisanniang* 荆十三娘), 1938

Ink and colour on paper; 100 x 48 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

*Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 192.

Figure 162

Dagnan-Bouveret

'The Accident', 1879

Oil on canvas; 92.5 x 130 cm; The Walters Art Museum

Shown on <http://art.thewalters.org/viewwoa.aspx?id=17015>

Figure 163

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)

Scene from 'The Massacre at Chios' (*Scène des Massacres de Scio*), 1824

Oil on canvas; 419 x 354 cm; Musée du Louvre

Shown on [http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=22745](http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22745)

Figure 164

Xu Beihong

'Jiufang Gao' (*Jiufang Gao* 九方皋), 1927

Ink and colour on paper; 83.9 x 119 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Shi Shuqing ed. *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* (2005), p. 134.

Figure 165

Xu Beihong

Drawing in the Preparation of *Jiufang Gao* (*Jiufang Gao huagao* 九方皋畫稿), undated

Ink on paper; 63 x 48 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 87.

Figure 166

Théobald Chartran (1849-1907)

'The Sack of Rome by the Gauls', 1877

Oil on canvas; 146.5 x 113.7 cm;

École des Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris

Published in Weisberg, Gabriel P. *Against the Modern* (2002), p. 41.

Figure 167

Xu Beihong

'Qin Qiong Selling His Horse' (*Qin Qiong maina* 秦瓊賣馬), undated

Charcoal drawing; 48 x 63 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 80.

Figure 168

Xu Beihong

'Horse and Groom' (*Ma yu mafu* 馬與馬伕), early-dated

Charcoal drawing; 51 x 31 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. II, p. 25.

Figure 169

Xu Beihong

'Indian Man' (*Yindu nanzi* 印度男子), 1940

Charcoal drawing; 46.8 x 33.9 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. IV, plate 31.

Figure 170

Xu Beihong

Drawing in the Preparation of *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*

(*Wei Yugong yishan zuo de xizuo* 爲愚公移山作的習作), 1940

Charcoal drawing; 56 x 33.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum  
Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 94.

Figure 171

Xu Beihong

'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1926

Charcoal drawing; 23.5 x 31.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. III, plate 95.

Figure 172

Xu Beihong

'Morning Song' (*Chenqu* 晨曲), 1936

Ink and colour on paper; 82 x 99 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 89.

Figure 173

Xu Beihong

'Wounded Lion' (*Fushang zhi shi* 負傷之獅), 1938

Ink and colour on paper; 110 x 109 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 110.

Figure 174

Xu Beihong

'Join Forces in the Eastern Capital' (*Huishi Dongjing* 會師東京), 1943

Ink and colour on paper; 113 x 217 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 114.

Figure 175

Xu Beihong

'Horse Grazing' (*Shishu* 食黍), 1943

Ink and colour on paper; 78 x 40 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 147.

Figure 176

Xu Beihong

'Heroic Memory' (*Zhuanglie de huiyi* 壯烈的回憶), 1937

Ink and colour on paper; 133 x 77 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 77.

Figure 177

Xu Beihong

'Rumination' (*Chenyin* 沉吟), 1932

Ink and colour on paper; 107 x 101.5 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Shi Shuqing ed. *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* (2005), p. 132.

Figure 178

Xu Beihong

'Rumination' (*Chenyin* 沉吟), 1936

Ink and colour on paper; 111 x 108 cm, Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 214.

Figure 179

Xu Beihong

'Running Horse' (*Benma* 奔馬), 1938

Ink and colour on paper; 52 x 78 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 128.

Figure 180

Xu Beihong and Qi Baishi (齊白石, 1864-1957)

'Gamecocks' (*Douji* 鬥雞), 1947

Ink and colour on paper; 103 x 79 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. II, plate 81.

Figure 181

Xu Beihong and Wang Yachen (汪亞塵, 1894-1983)

'Cat and Goldfishes' (*Mao shi jinyu* 貓石金魚), 1946

Ink and colour on paper; 107.5 x 36 cm; Location: uncited

Published in Shi Shuqing ed. *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* (2005), p. 59.

Figure 182

Chen Hongshou

'Instructing Girl Pupils in the Arts' (*Shoutu tu* 授徒圖), ca 1649

Ink and colour on silk; 90.4 x 46 cm; University Art Museum, Berkeley

Published in Wong Wange ed. *Chen Hongshou* (1997), Vol. II, p. 190.

Figure 183

'Gains from Hunting and Reaping' (*Geyi shouhuo tu* 戈射收穫圖), 25-220

Brick relief; Sichuan Museum



Published in Shen Kuiyi 沈揆一 *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huihuabian 18: Huaxiangshi huaxiangzhuan* 中國美術全集：繪畫編 18：畫像石畫像磚, 'Corpus of Chinese Art: Painting 18: Stone Relief and Brick Relief' (Shanghai, 1988), plate 191.

Figure 184

Xu Beihong

'Phoenix Tree, Cat and Butterfly' (*Wutong mao die* 梧桐貓蝶), 1942

Ink and colour on paper; 92 x 42.5 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Published in *Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxiandai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong* (2006), p. 66.

Figure 185

Ren Bonian

'Cats Playing under the Shade of Banana Palms' (*Jiaoyin maoxi tu* 蕉蔭貓戲圖), 1882

Ink and colour on paper; 173.2 x 49.7 cm; Shanghai Museum

Published in Liu Juan *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo huihua quanji* (Beijing, 1997-), Vol. XXX, plate 240.

Figure 186

Xu Beihong

'Muddle' (*Manhan* 顛頂), 1934

Ink and colour on paper; 113 x 54 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. II, plate 61.

Figure 187

Xu Beihong

'Magpies' (*Shuangque tu* 雙鵲圖), 1942

Ink and colour on paper; 60.7 x 53 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

Published in *Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxiandai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong* (2006), p. 65.

Figure 188

Zhao Ji (趙佶, 1082-1135)

'Finches and Bamboo' (*Zhuqin tu* 竹禽圖), undated

Ink and colour on silk; 27.9 x 45.7 cm; The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Shown on [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nsong/ho\\_1981.278.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nsong/ho_1981.278.htm)

Figure 189

Ren Bonian

'Mynas Singing Spring' (*Youniao mingchun* 幽鳥鳴春), 1886

Ink and colour on paper; Size: uncited; Nanjing Museum

Published in Li Chu-ting and Wan Qingli. *Zhongguo xiandai huihua shi* (1998-2003), Vol. I, p. 128.

#### Figure 190

Xu Beihong

'Plum Blossom' (*Shuying* 疏影), 1943

Ink and colour on paper; 90 x 57 cm;

*Yizhiqiang* 一支槍 Revolutionary Museum, Jiangxi

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 16.

#### Figure 191

Xu Beihong

'Ink Pine' (*Mosong* 墨松), 1935

Ink and colour on paper; 130 x 76 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 239.

#### Figure 192

Wen Zhengming (文徵明, 1470-1559)

'Zither and Crane' (*Qin he tu* 琴鶴圖), undated

Ink and colour on paper; 63.4 x 29.2 cm; Taipei Palace Museum

Shown on

<http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/dacs5/System/Exhibition/Detail.jsp?OID=1084958>

#### Figure 193

Xu Beihong

'Pine and Cranes' (*Song he tu* 松鶴圖), undated

Ink and colour on paper; 64 x 133 cm; Location: uncited

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 98.

#### Figure 194

Lang Shining and Tang Dai (唐岱, 1673-?)

'Pine and Cranes' (*Song he tu* 松鶴圖), undated

Ink and colour on silk; 223 x 142 cm; Shenyang Palace Museum

Published in Liu Jiuan *et al.* eds. *Zhongguo huihua quanji* (Beijing, 1997-), Vol. XXVII, plate 176.

Figure 195

Xu Beihong

'Pine and Cranes' (*Shuanghe* 雙鶴), 1938

Ink and colour on paper; 131 x 78 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 101.

Figure 196

Xu Beihong

'Pine, Cypress and Two Cranes' (*Songbo shuanghe tu* 松柏雙鶴圖), 1932

Ink and colour on paper; 82.7 x 47.6 cm; Beijing Palace Museum

*Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxiandai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong* (2006), p. 37.

Figure 197

Xu Beihong

'On Hearing the News of Taking Over Nanjing at the Assembly for World Peace'

(*Zai Shijie heping dahui shang tingdao Nanjing jiefang xiaoxi* 在世界和平大會聽到南京解放消息), 1949

Ink and colour on paper; 352 x 71 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (2001), Vol. III, p. 208.

Figure 198

Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825)

'The Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon I and the Crowning of the Empress Joséphine in Notre-Dame Cathedral on December 2, 1804'

(*Sacre de l'Empereur Napoléon Ier et Couronnement de l'Impératrice Joséphine dans la Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris, le 2 Décembre 1804*), 1806- 1807

Oil on canvas; 621 x 979 cm; Musée du Louvre

Shown on [http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=22500](http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22500)

Figure 199

Xu Beihong

'Drawing of Leader Mao in the Preparation of 'Leader Mao with His People''

(*Mao Zhuxi zai renmin zhong huagao* 毛主席在人民中畫稿), 1950

Charcoal drawing; 32.5 x 40.5 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 105.

Figure 200

Xu Beihong

'Drawing of Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai'

(*Lu Xun yu Qu Qiubai huagao* 魯迅與瞿秋白畫稿), 1952

Charcoal drawing; 63 x 48 cm; Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

Published in Song Guangsen *et al.* eds. *Xu Beihong huaji* (1981-88), Vol. V, plate 112.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

First of all, this thesis is not going to look upon Xu Beihong as a god-like figure who was able to guide the direction of twentieth-century Chinese painting largely on his own, or as a Communist painter who used his paintings politically to raise his objections to the KMT government (*Kuomintang*, the leading party of the Republic of China). On the contrary, this thesis proposes to look at Xu Beihong simply as an artist whose works serve mainly to project his personal aspirations for his art and for his career. Born in an age when China was undergoing a huge revolution, to the extent that a large-scale transplantation of Western civilisation had reached the cultural core of Confucianism in China, Xu Beihong's proficiency in Western realism helped the rapid accumulation of his reputation in China's art world, a field which was also gradually dominated by the Western fine art framework following the flood of Western culture into China. Realism, through the endorsement and legitimisation provided by the New Culture Movement (ca 1916-1920) to the Communist government, had become the guiding principle for Chinese art in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Xu Beihong's devotion to realism therefore won him an incomparable position in China's art arena. This charismatic glorification of Xu Beihong resulted in his pre-eminent status in Chinese art; but this same eminence also frequently brought Xu Beihong under attack, in particular in the light of the non-figurative and autonomous tendencies in modern art. To avoid imposing such ideological judgements on a study of Xu Beihong and his work, this thesis uses the term 'agency', aiming to focus on Xu Beihong's own efforts, in particular his appropriation of Western realism in developing his glorious career in China's art world. So the term 'agency' as used

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<sup>1</sup> On the development of realism in twentieth-century Chinese art, see Lin Xingyue 林惺嶽, *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi* 中國油畫百年史, 'A Century of Chinese Oil Painting' (Taipei, 2002).

here has nothing to do with influence or impact. In other words, this thesis is not going to look at Xu Beihong as a symbolic national hero and thus offer a retrospective evaluation of the authenticity of his greatness. This thesis instead employs the concept of agency, endeavouring to put Xu Beihong into his proper context, restoring his empirical presence as a concrete person and artist. With the use of term 'agency' and the inevitable limit of the length of a thesis, this dissertation will focus on investigating Xu Beihong's art and life from the late 1910s to the mid -930s, before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. This war commenced in 1937 and ceased in 1945, and was immediately followed by the Chinese Nationalist-Communist Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the later stage of Xu Beihong's career and the whole artistic climate of China were subjected to unavoidable interference from China's politics. This thesis therefore will not elaborate Xu Beihong's life during this period.

### 1.1 The Definition of Realism

Realism, translated into Chinese as *xieshi* (寫實), *xianshi* (現實), *xieshi zhuyi* (寫實主義), or *xianshi zhuyi* (現實主義), was a neologism which appeared in Chinese vocabulary in the early twentieth century. The article *Xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi* (小說與群治之關係, 'On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People'), which was published by the late-Qing reform-minded Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) in 1902, was among the earliest Chinese texts to mention the term 'realism'. Liang Qichao divided fictions into two styles: the idealistic (*lixiangpai* 理想派) and the realistic (*xieshipai* 寫實派). The former provided readers with a utopian world, while the latter revealed to readers the actuality of the present earthly world.<sup>3</sup> Liang

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<sup>2</sup> On these two wars, see Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York and London, 1991), pp. 435-513.

<sup>3</sup> Liang Qichao, 'Xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi', in Fang Zhiqin 方志欽 and Liu Sifen 劉斯奮

Qichao assigned to fiction the tasks of educating people and of rescuing what he saw as diseased Chinese society. Liang Qichao's expectations for fiction demonstrate how realism has been inevitably intertwined with nationalism since it was introduced into China.

Liang Qichao's article saw China as an ill state, and this point of view became a consensus among radical intellectuals. Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) recorded the advantages of Europe when he lived there in exile from 1904. The purpose of his European trips was to seek the "magical prescription and miraculous medicine" from the West to rescue a "seriously ill China".<sup>4</sup> The leading figure of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shi (胡適, 1891-1962), regarded realism as the remedy for the Chinese people's escape from the real, dark and diseased state of their nation and society.<sup>5</sup> For these radical intellectuals, traditional literature was also a manifestation of the diseased culture and thus also needed to be reformed. Hu Shi advocated replacing classical literary conventions with vernacular, a process which he called Chinese Renaissance.<sup>6</sup> Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀, 1879-1942) proposed a revolution in literature by abandoning the aristocratic, classical and hermit literature in pursuit of the national, realistic and social literature.<sup>7</sup> The scholar of Chinese literature

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eds, *Liang Qichao shiwenxuan* 梁啟超詩文選, 'A Selection of Liang Qichao's Poems and Essays' (Guangdong, 1983), pp. 471-482 (pp. 472-473).

<sup>4</sup> Zhong Shuhe 鍾叔河, 'Xunzhao zhenli de Kang Youwei' 尋找真理的康有為, 'Kang Youwei, the Truth Seeker' in Zhong ed., *Zouxiang shijie congshu - Kang Youwei: Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong; Liang Qichao: Xindalu youji ji qita; Qiandanshili; Guimao lüxingji, guiqianji* 走向世界叢書 - 康有為：歐洲十一國游記兩種；梁啟超：新大陸游記及其他；錢單士厘：癸卯旅行記，歸潛記, 'On the Way to the World Series - Kang Youwei: Travelogue of Two of the Eleven Visited European Countries; Liang Qichao: The Americas Travelogue and Others; Qiandanshili: Travelogues of the Guimao Year and Guiqian' (Hunan, 1985), pp. 11-47 (p. 35).

<sup>5</sup> Hu Shi, 'Yibusheng zhuyi' 易卜生主義, 'Ibsenism', *Xinqingnian* 新青年 (also *New Youth*), 4.6 (1918), pp. 489-490.

<sup>6</sup> Hu Shi, 'Wenxue gailiang chuyi' 文學改良芻議, 'Suggestions for Reform in Literature', *New Youth*, 2.5 (1917), pp. 1-11; Hu Shi, 'The Renaissance in China', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 5.6 (1926), pp. 265-283; Hu Shi, *The Chinese Renaissance* (Chicago, 1934).

<sup>7</sup> Chen Duxiu, 'Wenxue geming lun' 文學革命論, 'On the Literary Revolution', *New Youth*, 2.6 (1917), pp. 1-4.

C.T. Hsia has pointed out this unique “obsession with China” which was pervasive among the intelligentsia in China in the first half of the twentieth century. Chinese literature of this period reveals an “obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity”.<sup>8</sup> In this obsession with changing China, realism was considered to be a remedy for China’s disease and a vehicle for Chinese cultural reform, and as a result it carried the nationalist burden since the beginning of its introduction into China.

The intellectuals mentioned above not only proposed reforms in Chinese literature, they were also the pivotal figures who brought innovation and realism to the art field. The term ‘Renaissance’ was also used widely in the art world by eminent Westernised painters such as Lin Fengmian (林風眠, 1900-1991) and Xu Beihong.<sup>9</sup> Chen Duxiu firmly announced that Western pictorial realism was the absolute way to reform Chinese painting.<sup>10</sup> This art revolution which was proposed by Chen Duxiu in 1919 became the guide for the direction of modern Chinese art. Therefore, after it was introduced into China, realism quickly assumed significance in the Chinese cultural field. Its popularity reflected three important phenomena in modern Chinese literature and art: first, a large-scale transplant of Western knowledge into China; second, the importance of nationalism in modern Chinese literary and art fields; and third, realism was an

<sup>8</sup> C.T. Hsia, ‘Obsession with China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature’, in Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (New Haven and London, 1971), pp. 533-554 (pp. 533-534).

<sup>9</sup> Lin Fengmian, ‘Zhi quanguo yishujie shu’ 致全國藝術界書, ‘A Letter to the National Art Field’, in Lang Shaojun 郎紹君 and Shui Zhongtian 水中天 eds, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* 二十世紀中國美術文選, ‘A Selection of Essays on Twentieth-Century Chinese Art’ (Shanghai, 1999), Vol. I, pp. 155-175; Xu Beihong, ‘Fuxing Zhongguo yishu yundong’ 復興中國藝術運動, ‘The Renaissance Movement of Chinese Art’, in Xu Boyang 徐伯陽 and Jin Shan 金山 eds, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji* 徐悲鴻藝術文集, ‘A Collection of Xu Beihong’s Writings on Art’ (Taipei, 1987), pp. 547-550.

<sup>10</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Meishu geming’ 美術革命, ‘Art Revolution’, *New Youth*, 6.1 (1919), pp. 84-86 (p. 86).



indispensable attribute of modernity in Chinese literature and art.

## 1.2 Realism and Xu Beihong's Career

The superiority of realism in modern Chinese art contributed to Xu Beihong's eminent status in the world of Chinese painting. Xu Beihong first learnt painting with his father, Xu Dazhang (徐達章, ? - 1914), and earned a living by making portraits. Using realistic techniques in his portraiture, Xu Beihong then developed his career in the commercial art world of Shanghai from 1915 to 1917, and had opportunities to associate with influential figures in the reformation of Chinese painting, such as Kang Youwei and the leaders of the Lingnan School, Gao Jianfu (高劍父, 1879-1951) and Gao Qifeng (高奇峰, 1888-1933). From 1918 to 1919, Xu Beihong taught painting at the Beijing University Painting Research Society (*Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui* 北京大學畫法研究會), which was organised by Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868-1940), whose aesthetic thoughts had far-reaching influence upon the formation of the fine art field in twentieth-century China. Moreover, Beijing University was the base for the pro-Western New Culture Movement. Xu Beihong's experiences in Shanghai and Beijing enabled him to associate with the aforementioned intellectuals who played a decisive role in shaping the contours of modern Chinese art and thus saw their influence upon Xu's lifelong endeavours in reforming Chinese painting with Western realism. From 1919 to 1927, Xu Beihong pursued art studies in Europe. He acquired a solid grounding in Western academic realism during this period. After he returned to China, his proficiency in painstaking realism rapidly won him fame as an accomplished Chinese spokesman for Western art. In the 1929 National Art Exhibition, Xu Beihong's image as a rigid realist was reinforced by his denigration of Western modernist painters. Soon after he moved back to China, Xu Beihong started to create large-scale hybrid history

paintings which became the most representative of his artistic achievements. Later on, Xu Beihong gradually turned his attention to the creation of richly allegorical ink paintings. In particular, his expressive horse paintings brought him prestige as a leader in the world of national painting (Fig. 1). As a loyal practitioner of Western realism, Xu Beihong was highly regarded as the founder of Chinese Realism, the father of modern Chinese painting, the forerunner of the modern Chinese Renaissance, the pioneer of new Chinese art, and so on.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, with the rich implications and patriotic passion in his works, Xu Beihong's status in China's art world was further elevated as an indispensably important figure in both the Westernised and the traditional arenas of Chinese painting. As regards Xu Beihong's achievements and his significance in modern Chinese art history, the Taiwanese artist and critic Xie Lifa concluded that Xu occupies the most prominent position.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3 Literature Review

There has been a considerable number of publications on Xu Beihong's life and work. Xu Beihong's wives, Jiang Biwei (蔣碧薇) and Liao Jingwen (廖靜文), have both published biographies of him.<sup>13</sup> A complete collection of Xu Beihong's speeches, articles, inscriptions and letters was also published by Wang

<sup>11</sup> Xie Lifa 謝里法 and Jiang Xun 蔣勳, *Xu Beihong – Zhongguo Xieshi zhuyi de dianjizhe* 徐悲鴻 – 中國寫實主義的奠基者, 'Xu Beihong – The Founder of Chinese Realism' (Taipei, 1984); Guo Moruo 郭沫若, 'Jinian Xu Beihong xiansheng' 紀念徐悲鴻先生, 'In Memory of Xu Beihong', in Wang Zhen 王震, *Xu Beihong yanjiu* 徐悲鴻研究, 'A Study on Xu Beihong' (Jiangsu, 1991), pp. 282-283; Murase Masao 村瀬雅夫, 'Xiandai Zhongguo huihua fuxing de bizu' 現代中國繪畫復興的鼻祖, 'The Forerunner of Modern Chinese Renaissance', in *Mei de huhuan – Jinian Xu Beihong danchen 100 zhounian* 美的呼喚 – 紀念徐悲鴻誕辰一百週年, 'A Call for Beauty – In Memory of Xu Beihong on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Birthday' (Beijing, 1995), pp. 34-44.

<sup>12</sup> Xie and Jiang, *Xu Beihong*, p. 99.

<sup>13</sup> Jiang Biwei, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu: Wo yu Beihong* 蔣碧薇回憶錄：我與悲鴻, 'Jiang Biwei's Memoirs: Beihong and Me' (Taipei, 1967); Liao Jingwen, *Xu Beihong yisheng: Wo de huiyi* 徐悲鴻一生：我的回憶 'Xu Beihong's Life: My Memoirs' (Beijing 1999).

Zhen (also named Jin Shan), and Xu Beihong's son, Xu Boyang.<sup>14</sup> They also published detailed chronologies of Xu Beihong.<sup>15</sup> Besides his texts, Xu Beihong's paintings have also been continuously published. Among them, *Xu Beihong huaji* (徐悲鴻畫集, 'Paintings by Xu Beihong'), published by the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, and *Xu Beihong huihua quanji* (徐悲鴻繪畫全集, 'A Corpus of Xu Beihong's Paintings'), published by the *Yishujia* publisher, have the most comprehensive collections of Xu Beihong's works.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the publishing of the works collected in the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, the Beijing Palace Museum held an exhibition to display its collection of Xu Beihong's paintings between November 2005 and February 2006. Several of the exhibited works had previously been little known to the public.<sup>17</sup> The latest large-scale exhibition on Xu Beihong was held in Singapore from April to June 2008, and it explored the social practices in Xu Beihong's art in addition to displaying several of his well-known paintings.<sup>18</sup> In addition to all this, some catalogues have studied the market value of Xu Beihong's paintings and told readers how to tell the authenticity of works which have been circulated in the market.<sup>19</sup> These publications have broadened our knowledge of Xu Beihong's

<sup>14</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, 2 vols (Taipei, 1987); Wang Zhen and Xu Boyang eds, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji* 徐悲鴻藝術文集, 'A Collection of Xu Beihong's Writings on Art' (Ningxia, 1994); Wang Zhen ed., *Xu Beihong wenji* 徐悲鴻文集, 'A Collection of Xu Beihong's Writings' (Shanghai, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Xu Boyang and Jin Shan eds, *Xu Beihong nianpu* 徐悲鴻年譜, 'A Chronology of Xu Beihong' (Taipei, 1991); Wang Zhen ed., *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian* 徐悲鴻年譜長編, 'A Comprehensive Chronology of Xu Beihong' (Shanghai, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Song Guangsen 宋光森 et al. eds, *Xu Beihong huaji*, 6 vols (Beijing, 1981-1988); *Xu Beihong huihua quanji*, 3 vols (Taipei, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> *Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxindai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong* 故宮博物院藏近現代書畫名家作品集：徐悲鴻, 'Collections of Works of Renowned Modern Painters and Calligraphers in the Beijing Palace Museum: Xu Beihong', exhibition catalogue (Beijing: Beijing Palace Museum, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang* 徐悲鴻在南洋, 'Xu Beihong in the Malay Archipelago', exhibition catalogue (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Shi Shuqing 史樹青 ed., *Xiandai shuhua touzi: Xu Beihong juan* 現代書畫投資：徐悲鴻卷, 'Investment in Modern Chinese Calligraphy and Painting: The Volume of Xu Beihong' (Beijing, 2005); Yang Xin 楊新 ed., *Zhongguo jinxindai shuhua zhenwei jianbie: Xu Beihong juan* 中國近現代書畫真偽鑑別：徐悲鴻卷, 'The Authenticity of Modern Chinese Calligraphy and

artistic accomplishments from many different angles.

Xu Beihong's significance in modern Chinese art has put him among the main focuses of interest in related scholarship. Wang Zhen is perhaps the researcher who has been devoted the most time to working on him. In addition to the publishing of his chronologies and writings, Wang Zhen also collected a thorough list of reports, reviews and articles on Xu Beihong.<sup>20</sup> These papers, in particular those written in memory of Xu Beihong, collectively formulated a charismatic vision of Xu Beihong, a vision which has continued into this century. For example, in the conference which was held in memory of Xu Beihong on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in Nanjing in 2003, Xu Beihong's charisma was still emphasised. His devotion to realism and patriotic passion was highly praised in the conference.<sup>21</sup> Also, as mentioned above, the Beijing Palace Museum held an exhibition on Xu Beihong in memory of him on the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday in 2005, which was also among the celebration repertoire of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beijing Palace Museum. This charismatic glorification of an artist was in large part derived from the Communist political perception of Xu Beihong's artistic contributions. Take Xu Beihong's history painting 'Jiufang Gao' (*Jiufang Gao* 九方皋, 1931) as an example: it was often politically read as a satire on the KMT's muddle-headed and tyrannical leadership which oppressed the real intellectuals and the Communists (Fig. 2).<sup>22</sup> However, the inscription on the *Jiufang Gao* points out that this painting was the seventh version which Xu Beihong had worked on this theme. Moreover, this painting was dedicated to the

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Painting: The Volume of Xu Beihong' (Zhengzhou, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong yanjiu*; Wang Zhen ed., *Xu Beihong pingji* 徐悲鴻評集, 'A Collection of Commentaries on Xu Beihong' (Guangxi, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Fan Baowen 範保文 *et al.* eds, *Shiji fengbei – Xinshiji shoujie Xu Beihong xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 世紀豐碑 – 世紀首屆徐悲鴻學術研討會論文集, 'The Landmark of the Century – A Collection of the Papers for the First Conference on Xu Beihong in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (Tianjin, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> For example, Wang, *Xu Beihong yanjiu*, pp. 287-295, 304 & 320.

memory of Lian Nanhu (廉南湖, 1868-1932), a traditional learned scholar and a collector of Chinese painting and calligraphy. This political reading of Xu Beihong's works reduced the rich layers of meanings in Xu Beihong's paintings, such as his aspirations and endeavours to combine Chinese and Western painting, and his interaction with the intellectual circles. Nonetheless, it helped to elevate Xu Beihong's eminence to be one of the greatest and the most patriotic painters in Communist China.

Besides the glorifying formulation of Xu Beihong, from the 1990s there has also been an increasing quantity of researches holding a relatively neutral perspective on Xu Beihong's contributions. This perspective has emerged along with the unfolding of the diversified landscape of twentieth-century Chinese art in the scholarship. Realism was seen as only one of several contingencies of modern Chinese painting. This re-evaluation of the significance of realism looked at modernity in China from a postcolonial angle which restored the active agency of Chinese artists in the face of the challenges posted by the West and thus re-approved the vitality of traditional ink painting in modern times. In this regard, Xu Beihong's realism has been criticised by some scholars as a passive and clumsy imitation of the West. The scholars Wen Fong and Michael Sullivan both argued that Xu Beihong's intention to combine Chinese and Western art in his history painting was a failure.<sup>23</sup> Sullivan even criticised Xu Beihong's choice of Western realism as being blind to the real state of modern Western art.<sup>24</sup> These negative comments on Xu Beihong's art reflect a fact that, although Xu Beihong's achievements were finally examined in the light of art for art's sake,

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<sup>23</sup> Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures: Late-Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 2001), p. 96; Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (California and London, 1996), p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 72.

they were seen within a critical framework of Western modern art, which saw the non-figurative tendency as the correct direction of modern painting. This pro-Western critical framework considers the subjective and expressive representations of traditional Chinese ink painting to be more coincident with the trends of Western modern art. This parallel between Western modernism and traditional Chinese art demonstrates the complexity of modernity in the discussion of Chinese painting. As John Clark has pointed out, a modern Chinese painting may be obviously inspired by the Western avant-garde even though it was created with very typical brush and ink.<sup>25</sup> In the studies of this complexity in modern Chinese painting, Xu Beihong's realism is often compared with the Chinese artists who employed more avant-garde trends of Western art or adopted traditional Chinese painting modes, such as Lin Fengmian and Chang Yu (also known as San Yu 常玉, 1900-1966).<sup>26</sup> David Wang in the article 'In the Name of the Real' invoked the debate between Xu Beihong and Xu Zhimo in the 1929 National Art Exhibition to examine Xu Beihong's realism and made the following comment that "The 'real' transmitted by their [The French Academic Realists] works might be understood as a residue of preceding realisms, anything but the 'true' Reality Xu Beihong saw. Xu Beihong's problem was not that he advocated an idea of the Real, but that he had not learned anything about the chameleon nature of Realism from his contact with European realism, to say nothing of the many historically proven variations in it that had occurred during the one hundred years before the 1929 Shanghai exhibition'.<sup>27</sup> David Wang apparently disagreed with the realism that Xu Beihong pursued in Europe and

<sup>25</sup> John Clark, 'Problems of Modernity in Chinese Painting', *Oriental Art*, 32.3 (1986), pp. 270-283.

<sup>26</sup> David Der-wei Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', in Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith eds, *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions* (New York, 2000), pp. 28-59; Eugene Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', in Hearn and Smith, *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, pp. 102-161.

<sup>27</sup> Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', p. 32.

then brought back with him to China. By comparison, David Wang approved Xu Zhimo's defence of the formalism of Western modern art. He commented that 'Looking back, one may find that his [Xu Zhimo] artistic tastes surpassed his poetic sensibilities'.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, David Wang used Lin Fengmian's paintings to exemplify Xu Zhimo's idea of modern art, and implied that Lin Fengmian's formalism might fit more than Xu Beihong's realism to be the mode of modern Chinese painting. David Wang evidently employed a Western art framework to examine the correctness of Xu Beihong's knowledge of Western art, but might ignore the subjectivity of a Chinese artist's Occident appropriation of the West. Xu Beihong is undoubtedly a figure of remarkable significance in modern Chinese painting because of his indispensable presence in a variety of related studies. Nonetheless, in the Western and comparative light, his eminence has been gradually eroded. Furthermore, this perspective has increasingly endowed Xu Beihong with a conservative image.

As discussed above, a rich body of materials and studies on Xu Beihong has been published. At the same time, this has brought a dichotomy to Xu Beihong's historical reputation. This dichotomy indicates that the corporeal Xu Beihong is becoming invisible in the discursive practices of formulating him as a symbolic and great 'author', because he has been increasingly detached from his own empirical experiences and his context. What then occupies the place of the author 'Xu Beihong' is an ideological operation.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, this thesis aims to conduct a fundamental study of Xu Beihong by looking into his own works. Although Xu Beihong had frequently been the focus or the issue in the scholarship, a thorough analysis of his paintings was not conducted until recently

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<sup>28</sup> Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> For the intricate relationships between ideological operation and historical writing, see Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author', in Donald Preziosi ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 299-314.

by the Chinese scholar Hua Tianxue (華天雪).<sup>30</sup> She published her study on Xu Beihong in 2007, in which she invoked formal analysis, examining in detail what reforms Xu Beihong had made to traditional Chinese painting through subjects, contents and techniques. By comparison, this thesis will study Xu Beihong's art on a chronological basis, and employs a more sociologically-oriented perspective, putting more emphasis on the interaction between Xu Beihong's career and his context.

#### 1.4 Methodology – Agency and Art Field

First, this thesis will focus on Xu Beihong's thoughts on realism and will also examine how Xu Beihong demonstrates his thoughts in his paintings. Moreover, this thesis aims to study Xu Beihong empirically and thus will investigate his works and activities in the context of his time. To achieve this goal, this thesis is going to employ the concepts of agent/agency and field, which the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) used to study the literary and art fields of nineteenth-century France.<sup>31</sup> To transcend the dichotomy between the subjectivism which sees an artist as a creator of universal mind free from his social context and the objectivism which sees an artist's creation fully determined by his social structures, Bourdieu looked at an artist as an agent whose actions were conditioned by his 'habitus' and his social situations. Habitus refers to a set of dispositions which incline an artist to act in a certain manner. It is generally formed from a long-term process of inculcation such as education and family background.<sup>32</sup> Although habitus conditions an artist's actions to a large extent, an artist may decide which action he is going to take

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<sup>30</sup> Hua Tianxue, *Xu Beihong de Zhongguohua gailiang* 徐悲鴻的中國畫改良, 'Xu Beihong's Reforms in Chinese Painting' (Shanghai, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> For Bourdieu's studies of French literary and art fields, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge and Oxford, 2004); and *The Rules of Art* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> For the discussion of habitus, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 1984), pp. 169-225.



according to his social relations in the field in which he is situated, rather than being determined only by his habitus. Bourdieu still associated an artist's intentions with his social context, but did not deprive the artists of his subjectivity. The subjectivity of agent and agency has been further emphasised by later anthropologists and art historians, such as Alfred Gell and W.J.T. Mitchell.<sup>33</sup> These studies, however, ground the active aspects of the agents in objective social relations, that is, "the objectivity of the subjective" in Bourdieu's terms.<sup>34</sup> In other words, they emphasise the manipulations and intentions of the agents without looking at them with the pure charismatic vision of subjectivism or with mechanistic structuralism. This thesis aims to look at Xu Beihong with this concept of agent, with the intention of demonstrating how Xu Beihong's origins as a professional portraitist led to his preference for realism, why he chose Western academic realism when he was in France, how he adapted Western realism for China's local context, and why he rejected the circulation of Western modern painting in China. Looking at Xu Beihong as an agent who is conditioned by his habitus, on behalf of Western realism, and who makes choices according to his social situations, it will ground the trajectory of Xu Beihong's career from a traditional portraitist, a practitioner of Western academic realism, a rigid realist, and then the leader of modern Chinese painting in the art field and social context of his day. With that kind of agency which strikes a balance between passive receiver and active maker, this thesis intends to avoid the charismatic elevation of Xu Beihong as the ruler who was capable of shaping the contours of modern Chinese painting on his own; meanwhile, agency will base Xu Beihong's adherence to realism on his artistic aspirations and social positions

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<sup>33</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998); W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 4.

without looking at it as only a belated and passive imitation of the West.

Agency has been increasingly employed in the studies of modern Chinese literature to turn the focus of non-Western modernisms from makers' influence to receivers' appropriation.<sup>35</sup> By looking into modern Chinese literary works, Shu-mei Shih revealed in the Chinese agency the "wilful manipulation and misunderstanding of the Occidental Other for distinctly local purposes".<sup>36</sup> This Occidental construction of the West was also discussed by Lydia Liu in her research on the large-scale translation project in modern China.<sup>37</sup> Their treatises will be useful references for this study of Xu Beihong's reading of realism. This thesis intends to avoid looking at Xu Beihong's understanding of realism in the light of the West, but to focus on his personal interpretation of this superior form of cultural capital which was legitimised in the New Culture Movement. By scrutinising Xu Beihong's writings, speeches and opinions on realism in the 1910s and 1920s, this thesis aims to reveal how Xu Beihong, as an agent on behalf of Western realism in China, gradually established his prestige in the art world through his perception, translation and appropriation of realism. This thesis is going to focus on Xu Beihong's intentions and actions to adjust his reading of realism in accordance with structural changes in the art field, and by this means it will also demonstrate the dynamic and complex relationship between the agent and his social situations.

In addition to unfolding Chinese agents' local constructions of realism, this investigation of Xu Beihong's thoughts on realism will bring to the fore the translation of fine art (*meishu* 美術) and the formation of an art field in early

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<sup>35</sup> For the critical term 'appropriation', see Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff eds, *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago and London, 2003), pp. 160-173.

<sup>36</sup> Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917-1937* (California and London, 2001), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, 1995).

twentieth-century China, the second point of this thesis. *Meishu*, the Chinese equivalent of 'fine art', did not exist in Chinese vocabulary until the first decade of the twentieth century. Its introduction involved a large-scale transplantation of Western knowledge into China to replace the Confucian orthodoxy which had been under destruction following the collapse of the imperial regime in 1911.<sup>38</sup> This translation project of fine art led to the formation of the art field in China. Moreover, it endowed fine art with the emblem of new Chinese culture and national character.<sup>39</sup> Along with the rhetorical formulation of fine art, the Western modes of representation also dominated the discourses of the twentieth-century Chinese painting. No matter which stance a Chinese painter was taking, radical or traditional, he had to redefine his origin and identity within this Westernised framework of *meishu*.<sup>40</sup> The radical painters may consider Western mimesis as the best vehicle with which to reform the conceptual forms of traditional Chinese painting; while the traditional camp drew on the non-figurative tendencies of modern Western art to defend the modernity of the traditionally orthodox literati painting.

The fundamental bifurcation of Chinese and Western painting traditions, as Norman Bryson has pointed out, increased the complexity of the discussion of modernity in Chinese painting.<sup>41</sup> The concept of field will describe this complex and contested nature of China's art arena. In Bourdieu's theoretical model, field

<sup>38</sup> Cai Yuanpei's article 'Yi meiyu dai zongjiao shuo' 以美育代宗教說, 'On the Replacement of Religion with Aesthetic Education' was the monumental statement for this transition of cultural framework. For this article, see Gao Pingshu 高平叔 *et al.* eds, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Jiaoyu (Xia)* 蔡元培文集：教育（下），'A Collection of Cai Yuanpei's Writings: Education (II)' (Taipei. 1995), pp. 378-384.

<sup>39</sup> For the formulation of *meishu*, intellectual revolution, artistic response, and educational reform, see Xiaobing Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement* (California and London, 2008), pp. 9-40.

<sup>40</sup> Shih Shou-Chien 石守謙, 'Dui Zhongguo meishushi yanjiu zhong zaixian lunshu moshi de shengsi' 對中國美術史研究中再現論述模式的省思, 'A Examination of the Discursive Mode of Representation in the Study of Chinese Art History', *Renwen xuebao* 人文學報 15 (1997), pp. 1-29.

<sup>41</sup> Fong, *Between Two Cultures*, p. 96.

is a structured social space which accommodates the agents who are occupying diverse positions engaged in competition for the control of power and for the legitimacy of what 'is' and what 'is not' the thing at issue.<sup>42</sup> In the art field, artists will be engaged in accumulating cultural capital, establishing prestige and conferring legitimacy on what should be modern Chinese painting. Michel Hockx's research on the literary field of twentieth-century China serves as the main reference for this study of China's art field. Hockx employed Bourdieu's theory of field to analyse the context of the formation of China's literary field, its operations and structures, and the actions of its agents.<sup>43</sup> He also pointed out that China's field was dominated by a third principle, in addition to the autonomous and heteronomous principles of the French field. He argued that this third principle "motivated modern Chinese writers to consider the well-being of their country and their people".<sup>44</sup> This concern for the nation and the people should be "the obsession with China" in C.T. Hsia's terms. This third principle caused the pervasiveness of nationalistic discourses and legitimised the superiority of realism in China's art field. Using this field model, this thesis intends to avoid criticising the conservatism of Xu Beihong's realism in the Western light, but to look at his rigid realist stance as a result of his wilful position-taking action within China's own conflicted art field.

### **1.5 The Structure of Thesis**

This thesis will feature an investigation into the trajectory of Xu Beihong's reading of realism in the 1910s and 1920s, the time pivotal in the formation and confirmation of Xu Beihong's realist identity, both chronologically and methodologically. Xu Beihong's career during this time will be divided into four

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<sup>42</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>43</sup> Michel Hockx ed., *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China* (Surrey, 1999), pp.1-20.

<sup>44</sup> Hockx, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 12.

stages: the Shanghai period, at Beijing University, the European period, and the 1929 National Art Exhibition. Each chapter will bring Xu Beihong's writings into scrutiny, and will exemplify them with his contemporaneous paintings, along with a look into related fields of activity.

Chapter 2 will examine how Xu Beihong's early experiences and the Shanghai circumstance shaped his perception of realism. First, this chapter will study how Xu Beihong's background as a professional portraitist equipped him with a great facility in realistic rendering and enabled him to enter the commercial art world and modern art education business of Shanghai, which was filled with Western chic and realistic practices. Second, with the mimesis principle shared in both Chinese and Western portraiture and the rhetorical interchange of connotations between the terms *xiezhen* (寫真, 'rendering the real'), *xieshi* and *zhenxiang* (真像, 'portraiture' and 真相, 'truth'), this chapter will investigate the process by which Chinese indigenous realism transited from an artisan practice to a superior form of cultural capital and a symbol of modernism and nationalism. With this assimilation and negotiation of Western realism, Chinese portraiture and nationalism, this chapter intends to reveal how Xu Beihong's early experiences and the related context formed his habitus which shaped his later penchant for realism.

Chapter 3 first looks into the translation of the Western term 'fine art' and the formation of art field in China. Cai Yuanpei was the pivotal figure in this large-scale transplanting of the Western art framework. He promoted aesthetic education to replace the traditional Confucian instruction and elevated the status of art beyond the level of mere technology. Through Cai Yuanpei's formulation, art became the new emblem of Chinese culture and national character. The second part of this chapter will focus on Xu Beihong's activities in the Beijing

University Painting Research Society, the association which Cai Yuanpei established to bring into practice his aesthetic ideas. Through the articles that Xu Beihong published during this time, this chapter will examine how Xu Beihong responded to this new thought and how he reshaped his identity as an artist and his perception of realism within this new art framework. Finally, this chapter will look at the Beijing University Painting Research Society as a small art field, examining how the tutors with different backgrounds reformulated their philosophies within this new framework and how they competed to retain their legitimacy or prestige in this newly-formed art field.

Chapter 4 will explore Xu Beihong's translation of Western realism through the articles and speeches that he published and delivered in the period during which he pursued art studies in Europe. First, this chapter is going to investigate Xu Beihong's student life in Paris, and the influence of French academic realism upon his works. Moreover, by looking into Xu Beihong's life in Paris, it will unfold his bohemian manner, which is overshadowed by his later stereotyped image as a conservative and rigid realist. This chapter is going to examine the actual image and evaluation of Xu Beihong in the eyes of his contemporaries. With his realistic craftsmanship and bohemian manner, Xu Beihong was successfully legitimised as an avant-garde and reputable agent on behalf of Western art in China's art field. On the basis of this image so different from the stereotype in scholarship, this chapter intends to argue that Xu Beihong's realism may not be perceived as a belated imitation of old-fashioned Western painting in the context of his day. In this regard, this chapter aims to focus on Xu Beihong's personal reading of Western realism instead of examining whether his translation is faithful to the originals or not. Through delineating Xu Beihong's explanation of realism, this chapter is going to disclose how an agent will manipulate

Western borrowings in accordance with his aspirations and positions and the rules of the given field.

Chapter 5 will scrutinise the first National Art Exhibition which was held in Shanghai in 1929. This exhibition is pivotal in the construction of Xu Beihong's image as an old-fashioned and rigid realist, because he published an article entitled *Huo* (惑, 'Doubts', 1929), in which he reproached several influential figures of modern Western painting, including Édouard Manet (1832-1883), Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954).<sup>45</sup> Xu Beihong's attack on modernist painting triggered a bitter dispute centred on 'Doubts', and Xu Zhimo (徐志摩, 1897-1931) became the loudest voice against Xu Beihong's stance. By delineating the two Xus' appropriation of the term *zhen* (真, 'reality'), this chapter will reveal the diversity in Chinese agents' Occidental formulation of the West. Besides the two Xus' debate, this chapter will also investigate other articles and reports about this exhibition. Through this investigation into the discursive space of the exhibition, this chapter will reveal the intertwining of fine art and nationalism specific in China's art field. Moreover, it will also disclose the complexity and perplexity which occurred in the shift of visual paradigms and rhetorical implications following the translation of 'realism' and 'fine art'. Additionally, this chapter also intends to unfold the increasingly matured and conflicted art field in China by probing the competition between the agents, each of whom was acting on behalf of a specific Western painting style. They competed to be accepted as the new legitimate authority in the contest as to what should be modern painting in China. This chapter aims to project the National Art Exhibition as the conflicting field of artistic negotiation and power display, in which Xu Beihong's seemingly anti-modern stance will be a wilful action of

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<sup>45</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Huo', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 131-134 (p. 131).

position-taking.

Finally, Chapter 6 will look into Xu Beihong's paintings, in particular the large-scale history paintings and the richly allegorical ink paintings. By analysing Xu Beihong's paintings from the perspectives of hybridity, allegory and modernity, this chapter intends to reveal how Xu Beihong crystallised his artistic ideas into his paintings, and how his paintings project the entwining of nationalism and the bifurcate pictorial systems of Chinese and Western art, the specific lure and challenge of modern Chinese painting.



## Chapter 2 The Perception of Realism

### 2.1 Indigenous Realism (*Xiezhen*) in Xu Beihong's Early Art Practice

Xu Beihong's interest in painting emerged at an early age. According to his autobiography, Xu Beihong's first painting teacher was his father Xu Dazhang, who was also a painter.<sup>46</sup> Xu Dazhang, however, was apparently not well-known because his name is seldom mentioned in the historical accounts or in later scholarship on Chinese painting. In Xu Beihong's account, his father made a living by making portraits and was able to paint realistically.<sup>47</sup> Xu Dazhang developed keen observational skills by drawing from nature instead of imitating acknowledged masterpieces. His method of learning painting suggests that he was a professional painter, because developing observational skills was essential in traditional portrait painting training, a genre of professional painting.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, his self-taught learning experience suggests that he came from a humble family. In addition to painting, Xu Beihong claimed that Xu Dazhang was also proficient in calligraphy and seal cutting, skills traditionally regarded as the artistic practices of literati painters.<sup>49</sup> This personal account may be a deliberate glorification of his father by Xu Beihong. Xu Dazhang was not an inheritor of a painting school nor was he of a scholar-official family. His social identity was that of a professional painter. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong praised his father for his scholarly accomplishments and Confucian high-mindedness. These

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<sup>46</sup> Xu Beihong's autobiography was published in the 46<sup>th</sup> issue of *Liang You* magazine (良友) in 1930. This article, 'Beihong zishu' (悲鴻自述, 'Beihong in His Own Words') is collected in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 1-28.

<sup>47</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Li Shuqing 李淑卿, 'Moxie zai xiaoxiang huashi de lunshu yu chuanguo' 默寫在肖像畫史的論述與創作, 'Discourse and Practice of Making Portraits from Memory in the History of Portraiture' *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊, 19. 3 (2002), pp. 29-58.

<sup>49</sup> Robert T. Thorp and Richard Vinograd, *Chinese Art and Culture* (New York, 2001), pp. 261-268 & 301-310.

references to Xu Dazhang's mastery of calligraphy and seal cutting and to his mild manner demonstrate that Xu Beihong intended to endow his father with the image of a literati painter, who historically enjoyed higher status than professional craftsmen.<sup>50</sup> Xu Beihong's intention is also manifest in his account of his early experience of art learning, when he said that his father required him not to learn painting until he had finished studying the canon of Confucian philosophy, the *Four Books and Five Classics*.<sup>51</sup>

Xu Beihong started to learn painting with his father at the age of nine and in the following year he was able to help his father to add colour to some minor parts in the pictures.<sup>52</sup> Few of Xu Dazhang's paintings have survived nowadays. Among them, *Songyin kezi tu* (松蔭課子圖, 'Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade', 1905), in the collection in the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum in Beijing, is the most frequently reproduced (Fig. 3). In addition, Xu Dazhang's surviving works also include a ten-leaf album of blue-and-green landscape paintings, *Jingxi shijing* (荆溪十景, 'Ten Views of Jingxi', 1907), now in the collection in the Yixing Archives (Fig. 4). This album renders ten scenic spots of Xu Dazhang's hometown in Yixing province. Such illustrated records of local scenic spots were popular in traditional Chinese prints.<sup>53</sup> The heavily-coloured green style of the album reveals a nostalgic flavour. This blue-and-green style is conventionally considered a characteristic of the artisan taste of traditional professional painting of the Northern School as opposed to the scholarly taste of

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<sup>50</sup> The dichotomy between literati and professional painting has often been seen in the narrative of Chinese painting history. Nevertheless, some studies in recent years have been conducted to challenge this dichotomy, such as James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Liu Xin 劉昕 ed., *Zhongguo gubanhua: Dili juan* 中國古版畫：地理卷, 'Traditional Chinese Woodcuts: Geography Volume' (Hunan, 1998).

literati painting of the Southern School.<sup>54</sup> The album-leaf format, nostalgic atmosphere and heavily-coloured style of the *Ten Views of Jingxi* can find similar examples in the works of professional painter, such as the Qing court painter and also the leading orthodox-school painter Wang Yuanqi's (王原祁, 1642-1715) *Xihu shijing tu* (西湖十景圖, 'Ten Views of West Lake') and Xu Dazhang's contemporary, Ren Xiong's (任熊, 1823-1857) album *Shiwan tu* (十萬圖, 'Ten of Ten Thousand Paintings', 1856) (Figs 5-6).

In contrast to the heavily-coloured landscape paintings, however, Xu Dazhang's *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade* is an outline drawing painting in ink and light colour. At the centre of the picture, Xu Dazhang and Xu Beihong are shown seated under the shadow of a pine tree. Xu Beihong holds a brush in his hand, about to write something down in the notebook, with a gesture which responds to the title of the painting. The four treasures of a scholar's study (brush, ink-stick, paper and ink-stone) and some old-fashioned thread-bound books are laid on the desk at which Xu Beihong sits. The background is a wall with a round window in it, and a number of thread-bound books are piled up behind the window. A scholarly air is accordingly lent to the painting by these surrounding items. This painting projects the image of a scholar on the father. Xu Dazhang's self-projection in the picture to a large degree coincides with the literati painter image which is bestowed on him in Xu Beihong's autobiography. Moreover, this painting also reveals Xu Dazhang's expectations for Xu Beihong, foreseeing Xu Beihong's later endeavours to become a Westernised Chinese painter with accomplishments in the literati painting realm.

The composition, in which a figure is given social identity or social meaning by being rendered in a setting full of antique artefacts, or with the

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<sup>54</sup> Richard M. Barnhart *et al.* eds, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 232-234.

cultural trappings of the literati, was popular in the portraiture of the later Ming and Qing periods. On the one hand, portrait painting of this type demonstrated the burgeoning material culture during this time, in line with the advent of a commercially-vibrant society of conspicuous consumption, which fostered an increasing interest in individualism and portraiture; on the other hand, this portrait genre helped professional painters to build their networks with the literati-gentry, and thus further deconstructed the dichotomy between the scholar-amateur and professional artists.<sup>55</sup> The scholarly air in *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade* is reminiscent of the handscroll *Wang Yuanqi yiju tu* (王原祁藝菊圖, 'Portrait of Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums') by the Qing professional portraitist Yu Zhiding (禹之鼎, ca 1647-1716) (Fig. 7). Wang Yuanqi is portrayed seated on a couch, surrounded by books and scrolls and attended by three servants. He is leaning against a backrest, sipping a cup of wine, and enjoying himself in appreciating an array of chrysanthemums in planters. The relaxed atmosphere, emblems of cultural refinement, and the wine and chrysanthemums all make an allusion to the fourth-century recluse-poet Tao Yuanming (陶淵明).<sup>56</sup>

Wang Yuanqi's face is rendered realistically with fine-line drawing, soft shading and careful, rich layers of ink washes, revealing Yu Zhiding's solid foundation in the portrait genre of professional painting. Xu Dazhang's *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade* also sees this vivid facial depiction with the aid of modelling technique, which is characteristic of Chinese portraiture. Nevertheless,

<sup>55</sup> Wang Cheng-hua 王正華, 'Nüren, wupin yu ganguan yuwang: Chen Hongshou wanqi renwuhua zhong Jiangnan wenhua de chengxian' 女人、物品與感官慾望：陳洪綬晚期人物畫中江南文化的呈現, 'The Late-Ming Culture of Sensibility: Women and Objects in Chen Hongshou's Late Figure Painting', *Jindai Zhongguo funitshi yanjiu* 近代中國婦女史研究, 10 (2002), pp. 1-57. For the relationship between individualism and portraiture in late Ming period, see Craig Clunas, 'Artist and Subject in Ming Dynasty China', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 105 (2000), pp. 43-72.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits, 1600-1900* (Cambridge and New York, 1992), pp. 53-54.

the figures in Xu Dazhang's painting are more rigid, lacking the sense of casual informality and mobility that Wang Yuanqi's image reveals, which is created by Yu Zhiding's suggestive description of the physical volume of Wang Yuanqi's torso under the robe. The frontal, full-length figure, portrayed seated in a chair, with the contrast between the heavier facial modelling and the relatively formulaic drawing of the clothing in Xu Dazhang's *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade*, are the customary pictorial devices in Chinese commemorative portraiture (Fig. 8).<sup>57</sup> There are no commemorative portraits among Xu Dazhang's surviving works. Nonetheless, an ancestor portrait, which is attributed to Xu Beihong's early work, may help us to understand Xu Dazhang's life as a portraitist and the skills he passed on to Xu Beihong (Fig. 9). This ancestor portrait shows a frontal and full-length figure seated in a chair at the centre of the picture. The forebear's head is modelled with a shading technique. The lifelike effect in his face is in contrast to his highly decorated official costume, which is devoid of any indication of physical presence under the robe. This ancestor portrait follows the conventions of Chinese ancestor portraiture. Nonetheless, the smiling look on the forebear's face reflects the influence of photography, introduced into China by the British at the time of the Opium War of 1840-42 (Fig. 10).<sup>58</sup>

Xu Beihong's ancestor portrait reveals his early training in the portraiture strand of professional painting. The aim of reaching visual verisimilitude in Chinese portraiture also appears in Xu Beihong's other surviving early-dated portraits. *Zhulao tu* (諸老圖, 'The Elderly') shows a different realistic style from the ancestor portrait and reveals other skills that Xu Beihong had acquired in the

<sup>57</sup> Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Washington, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> Stuart and Rawski, *Worshipping the Ancestors*, pp. 166-174.

early stage of his artistic career (Fig. 11). *The Elderly* depicts four frontal figures, two of them sitting and the other two standing beside a river. The two figures on the right are wearing gowns, padded jackets and little round caps, showing their bald foreheads, in the costume of the Qing period (1644-1911). This painting was probably done no later than the mid-1910s, around the time of the establishment of Republican China in 1912. The portrayal of the figures in the daily wear of the former imperial dynasty reveals an air of nostalgia, corresponding to the title of the painting. The landscape setting of the picture is more in the style of a Western watercolour, with the realistic rendering of the faces of the figures, reflecting the aid of photography in the making of this portrait painting. Its Western-influenced style is similar to another figure painting by Xu Beihong, in which two men are seemingly taking a stroll in the landscape (Fig. 12). The solidity of the facial modelling demonstrates here too the aid of photography and the Western influence. In the lower part of the picture appear a deer and two cranes, the auspicious symbols of longevity. The composition demonstrates a hybrid style combining traditional portraiture format and Western-style watercolour landscape setting. The later two figure paintings of Xu Beihong described above show little trace of the techniques which he applied in the traditional ancestor portrait. Different from his father's portraits, which were made using the pictorial methods that were conventional practices in Chinese portraiture, Xu Beihong had manifested significant Western artistic influence in his paintings at the outset of his artistic career. The watercolour style and the realistic portraits employing the aid of photography were the hallmarks of Western influence at that time, and these features also appear in Xu Beihong's portrait of the well-known, reform-minded Qing official Kang Youwei. Xu Beihong made this painting *Nanhai xiansheng liushi xingle tu* (南海先生六十行

樂圖, 'A Celebration for Kang Youwei's Sixtieth Birthday) in celebration of Kang's sixtieth birthday in 1916 (Fig.13). This is a watercolour painting: the faces of Kang Youwei and the other figures in the picture are heavily modelled. The size of the figures is relatively large in proportion to the garden background. These are the characteristics of the style of calendar poster making, of which Shanghai was the heartland at that time (Fig. 14).<sup>59</sup> Kang Youwei's portrait, executed in the style of contemporary Shanghai calendar poster painting, manifests the influence of this from of Shanghai commercial art on Xu Beihong when he stayed there from 1915 to 1917.<sup>60</sup> Being a professional painter of humble origins, Xu Beihong's ways of developing painting were associated with commercial and popular culture.

Xu Beihong's portrait paintings demonstrate his mastery of realistic rendering, a significant attribute of Chinese portraiture. The portraits discussed above exemplify the fact that visual verisimilitude was stressed in traditional Chinese portraiture in particular through the modelling of the faces of those portrayed. This emphasis on visual realism in Chinese portraiture is also exemplified in the traditional term for making portraits – *xiezhen*. In the English-Chinese dictionary published by the Commercial Press in 1903, the English words 'portrait' and 'portraiture' were translated as *zhenxiang*, and 'to paint a portrait' as *xiezhen*.<sup>61</sup> Seeking to create a good likeness of the portrayed had traditionally become a standard of evaluation for a portraitist. The Ming portraitist Zeng Jing (曾鯨, 1564-1647) was held in high esteem in the art discourse of his time on the grounds of the disturbingly illusionistic effects he

<sup>59</sup> For a comprehensive study of calendar posters and Shanghai's visual culture, see Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 7-15.

<sup>61</sup> *Shangwu shuguan Hua Ying zidian* 商務書館華英字典, 'Commercial Press English and Chinese Dictionary' (Shanghai, 1903), p. 193.

achieved in his portraits (Fig. 15). His reputation came from his skill in mimesis, as well as from his portraits of eminent people in the art and literary world. The critics remarked that the images portrayed in Zeng Jing's paintings were "alarmingly like real people" and "looked like reflections of models in a mirror".<sup>62</sup> His skill in realistic portraiture won him a reputation that made him the founder of *Bochen* School (波臣畫派), of which Yu Zhiding was also a significant figure.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Zeng Jing's significance in Chinese art history was also on account of the Western pictorial influence on his creation. It has been argued that the realistic effects of Zeng Jing's portraits were attributable to the impact of Western paintings and prints which were brought into China by the Jesuits around Zeng Jing's time. Although the emphasis on mimesis led to Chinese portraiture being placed on a lower position in the hierarchy of Chinese art, it allowed more space for Western art to exert influence on it. Thus, after Zeng Jing, there constantly appeared Western pictorial influence in Chinese portraiture, and this influence was coupled with the increasingly frequent traffic between China and the West, in particular in the works of the painters at court or in the treaty-port cities, such as Guangzhou, through which Western culture first entered China (Fig. 16).<sup>64</sup>

With this emphasis on visual realism in Chinese portraiture, the influence of Western art was continuously at work in professional painting. Xu Beihong's background as a professional portraitist thus led to him being exposed to Western

<sup>62</sup> Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self*, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> Kondo Hidemi 近藤秀實, *Bochen huapai* 波臣畫派, 'Bochen Painting School' (Jilin, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> On Western portraitists at the Qing court and their significance, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, 'Diplomats, Jesuits and Foreign Curiosities', in Evelyn S. Rawski *et al.* eds, *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795*, exhibition catalogue (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006), pp. 178-207. Guangzhou had become the heartland of Chinese export art after the eighteenth century. A large number of export paintings were executed in Western oils. On Guangzhou export painting, see Wan Qingli 萬青力, *Bingfei shuailuo de bainian: Shijiu shiji Zhongguo huihuashi* 並非衰落的百年：十九世紀中國繪畫史, 'The Century was not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting' (Taipei, 2005), pp. 80-94.



pictorial practices at an early age. His early portraits demonstrate that Xu Beihong had assimilated the latest artistic trends of foreign art in Shanghai by his time. The stress on *xiezhen*, the indigenous pictorial realism in Chinese portraiture, had foreseen Xu Beihong's later pursuit of Western realism.

## 2.2 The Shanghai Painting School's Influence on and Inspiration for Xu Beihong

The influence of Western art, in particular through its realistic practices, manifested itself in Xu Beihong's early portraits as discussed above. It appears that professional art in China was relatively open to the influence of alien painting. It is hard to discern the trajectory of the infusion of Western pictorial elements into Xu Beihong's early portraits by only comparing the ancestor portrait with the watercolour figure paintings. Nonetheless, the painters and devices from which Xu Beihong learnt painting, such as his father Xu Dazhang and the influential journalistic illustrator Wu Youru (吳友如, ?- 1893), showed that Western influence was tightly associated with his learning experience.<sup>65</sup> For example, Xu Dazhang's *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade* obliquely represented modern life experience in the metropolis of China, where Western culture was flooding in, although overall it remained very traditionally Chinese in its style. The metropolitan experience manifested itself in the close-up effect of the portrayed figures and the excessive display of things in a limited space. This compositional technique reveals an oppressive sense in Xu Dazhang's work, replacing the escapism in Yu Zhiding's *Portrait of Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums*, which is created by a void in the background. Furthermore, it is reinforced by the framed effect in the picture, created by the partial view of the pine tree, by the servants and by the round window. This sense of constriction represented the urban life experience.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the piercing eyes of Xu

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<sup>65</sup> Xu Beihong first learnt to paint by imitating one of Wu Youru's illustrations daily. Xu, 'Beihong zishu', p. 3. For the influence of Wu Youru on Xu Beihong, see Cho Shenko 卓聖格, 'Wu Youru – Xu Beihong Zhongguohua gaige linian xingcheng de guanjian yingxiangren 吳友如 – 徐悲鴻中國畫改革理念形成的關鍵影響人, 'Wu Youru – The Key Figure in the Formation of Xu Beihong's Ideas on Reforming Chinese Painting' *Xiandai meishu xuebao* 現代美術學報, 2 (1999), pp. 73-95.

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Hay, 'Painting and the Built Environment in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai', in Hearn and Smith, *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, pp. 60-101 (pp. 85-89).

Dazhang and Xu Beihong in the picture betray their self-awareness about seeing and being seen. As has been argued, the act of watching is a visual translation of urban life as a result of the experience of and interest in spectacle.<sup>67</sup>

The depiction of modern life apparent in Xu Dazhang's painting is also seen in *Pengcha xiyan* (烹茶洗硯, 'Brewing Tea and Washing the Inkstone' 1871), executed by Qian Huian (錢慧安, 1833-1911), a significant figure of the Shanghai School (Fig. 17). The cropped frame and the act of watching are the defining characteristics of the Shanghai School of painting. Some scholars have argued that the output of the Shanghai School is modern, but it disguises its modernity under the traditional subjects of landscape and the classical past.<sup>68</sup> The wide popularity of the paintings of the Shanghai School manifested the far-reaching influence of the School in Xu Dazhang's work. Xu Dazhang resided in a village, instead of the metropolitan city of Shanghai. His knowledge of the Shanghai School was acquired in part from his imitation of the works of its members that were circulated on the art market. Xu Beihong recalled that he first learnt of the best-known Shanghai School artist Ren Bonian (任伯年, 1840-1896) through a copy of Ren Bonian's *Zhong Kui* which Xu Dazhang made one day when he had visited the town.<sup>69</sup> According to Xu Beihong's account, his father's copy depicted Zhong Kui hacking a tree, which was in the shape of a little devil. Another example of this subject can be found in another of Ren Bonian's *Zhong Kui* paintings, *Zhong Jinshi zhanhu* (鍾進士斬狐, 'Zhong Kui Hacking a Fox', 1878) (Fig. 18). So it appears that a professional artist could learn to paint by means of the paintings or prints circulating on the open market. The famous

<sup>67</sup> Hay, 'Painting and the Built Environment in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai', p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> Hay, 'Painting and the Built Environment in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai'; Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, 'Remapping Borders: Ren Bonian's Frontier Paintings and Urban Life in 1880 Shanghai', *Art Bulletin*, 86.3 (2004), pp. 550-572.

<sup>69</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Ren Bonian pingzhuan' 任伯年評傳, 'A Critical Biography of Ren Bonian', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 601-607 (pp. 605-606).

modern landscape painter Qian Songyan (錢松品, 1898-1985) recalled how many painters first learnt to make portraits by means of copying the images in the illustrated book, *Wanxiaotang huazhuan* (晚笑堂畫傳, 'An Illustrated Biography of Historical Figures by the Wanxiao Studio').<sup>70</sup> The subject and composition of Xu Dazhang's *Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade* is similar to an illustration in the painting manual *Huapu caixin* (畫譜采新, 'New Modes to Painting Manuals'), in which images were mostly designed by Qian Huian and his pupils (Fig. 19).<sup>71</sup> So Xu Dazhang was able to represent the elements of modern life in his painting possibly by learning from the latest paintings or prints on the market. This method of learning may account for the frequent integration of novel techniques into professional painting.

Ren Bonian's paintings in printed form could be obtained on the market after 1887 through a painting manual entitled *Ren Bonian xiansheng zhenji huapu* (任伯年先生真蹟畫譜, 'Manual of Genuine Paintings by Master Ren Bonian').<sup>72</sup> A close relationship with the commercial market is a noted phenomenon of the Shanghai School.<sup>73</sup> The emergence of a burgeoning publishing industry in the late nineteenth century, in line with the introduction of lithography into China by 1876, on the one hand led to the massive involvement of the Shanghai-based painters in providing their designs for various print media. On the other hand, the new printing technology enabled the high quality of printed reproductions of artists' original works, giving rise to the Shanghai painters' interest in publishing their paintings in printed form, such as the

<sup>70</sup> Li, 'Moxie zai xiaoxiang huashi de lunshu yu chuanguo', p. 40. Shangguan Zhou 上官周, *Wanxiaotang huazhuan* (Hebei, 1996).

<sup>71</sup> Wu Shuping 吳樹平 ed., *Zhongguo lidai huapu huibian* 中國歷代畫譜彙編, 'A Corpus of Chinese Painting Manuals' (Tianjin, 2006), Vol. III, pp.507-581.

<sup>72</sup> Jonathan Hay, 'Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-Century China', in Ju-hsi Chou ed., *Art at the Close of China's Empire* (Arizona, 1998), pp. 134-188 (p. 136).

<sup>73</sup> Kuiyi Shen, 'Patronage and the Beginning of a Modern Art World in Late Qing Shanghai', in Jason C. Kuo ed., *Visual Culture in Shanghai 1850s-1930s* (Washington, 2007), pp. 13-27.

published collaborative manual *Haishang mingren huagao* (海上名人畫稿, Illustrations by Famous Shanghai Artists') in 1885.<sup>74</sup> Ren Bonian's highly-admired accomplishments meant that he was in great demand in the printing industry. His works were made available to the general public in the form of both single-artist and collaborative manuals. Additionally, he also made frontispiece portraits for the publications of writers and artists. For instance, in 1878, Ren Bonian made a portrait of his contemporary Shanghai painter and calligrapher Chen Yunsheng (陳允升, 1820-1884) for the publication entitled *Renzhai huasheng* (紐約畫賡, 'A Collection of Mr Ren Zhai's Paintings'), collecting over hundred works of Chen Yunsheng. This publication was promoted by several celebrities of the contemporary art world in Shanghai and it became a popular painting manual of its day.<sup>75</sup> Advertisements for this publication also appeared in the widely-circulated Shanghai-based newspaper *Shenbao* (申報) immediately. The flourishing publishing industry in Shanghai appears to have contributed to the wide popularity of Ren Bonian and other painters of the Shanghai School. At the same time, the close relationship between the Shanghai painters and commercial culture was manifested in the representation of metropolitan life in their works. The way Xu Beihong learnt about Ren Bonian reveals the commercial aspect of the Shanghai School, as well as the role of commercial art in Xu Beihong's own art learning.

Ren Bonian was an eminent professional painter in his time. He was highly admired in the art discourse of his day for his gift of making portraits in a

<sup>74</sup> Hay, 'Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-Century China', pp. 155-156.

<sup>75</sup> Lai Yu-chih, 'Fu liu qian jie: 1870 niandai Shanghai de Riben wangluo yu Ren Bonian zuopin zhong de Riben yangfen' 伏流潛借：1870 年代上海的日本網絡與任伯年作品中的日本養分, 'Surreptitious Appropriation: Japanese Networks in Shanghai in the 1870s and Ren Bonian's Contemporary Assimilation of Japanese Visual Conventions', *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立台灣大學美術史研究集刊, 14 (2003), pp. 159-242 (pp. 179-180).

strikingly lifelike manner.<sup>76</sup> The modelling and photographic vividness of his portrait heads indicates the significant Western pictorial influence on Ren Bonian (Fig. 20).<sup>77</sup> It has been argued that Ren Bonian's Western art learning may have been the consequence of his acquaintance with Liu Dezhai (劉德齋, 1843-1912), a brother of the Roman Catholic Church in the *Tushanwan* (土山灣) district of Shanghai.<sup>78</sup> Tushanwan had become the location of the headquarters of the Chinese Society of Jesus after 1874.<sup>79</sup> Liu Dezhai taught painting at Tushanwan Painting Studio, which was established by the Church to produce objects for religious purpose, and later he was appointed to manage the department of watercolour and ink painting from 1887.<sup>80</sup> An illustration of *The Last Supper* made by the Tushanwan Studio provides a glimpse into the techniques of the apprentices at the studio, and their training in Western art (Fig. 21). The Tushanwan Painting Workshop made a great contribution to the promotion of Western art in China, and Xu Beihong regarded it highly as the cradle of Western painting in China.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the relationship between Ren Bonian and the Tushanwan Painting Studio, the Western influence on Ren is also manifest in his use of the Western red transparent pigment. The Chinese artist Pan Tianshou (潘天壽, 1898-1971) indicated that the Western red pigment did not appear in the making of traditional Chinese painting before Ren Bonian and other Shanghai

<sup>76</sup> For example, Zhang Mingke 張鳴珂 (1829-1908), *Hansongke tan yi suolu* 寒松閣談藝瑣錄, 'Trivial Records of Comments on Art at Cold Pine Pavilion' (Shanghai, 1988), p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self*, p. 141.

<sup>78</sup> For Ren Bonian's association with the Tushanwan Studio, see Chialing Yang, *New Wine in Old Bottles: The Art of Ren Bonian in Nineteenth-Century Shanghai* (London, 2007), pp. 127-135.

<sup>79</sup> Zhang Hongxing 張弘星, 'Zhongguo zuizao de Xiyang meishu yaolan - Shanghai Tushanwan guer gongyiyuan de yishu shiye' 中國最早的西洋美術搖籃 - 上海土山灣孤兒工藝院的藝術事業, 'The Earliest Cradle of Western Art in China - Art Business of the Orphan Craft Workshop in the Tushanwan District of Shanghai', *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化, 3 (1991), pp. 124-130.

<sup>80</sup> Yang, *New Wine in Old Bottles*, p. 134.

<sup>81</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Xinyishu yundong zhi huigu yu qianzhan' 新藝術運動之回顧與前瞻, 'Looking at the New Art Movement in Retrospect and Prospect', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 427-433 (p. 429).

artists.<sup>82</sup>

Ren Bonian's attainments in portraiture are exemplified in his portrait of Wu Changshuo (吳昌碩, 1844-1927), a famous scholar-antiquarian calligrapher and painter of his day (Fig. 22). In the picture, Wu Changshuo is portrayed naked to the waist, sitting leisurely under the Banana palms to enjoy the cool air. He holds a round fan in his hand, with his upper body naked, a representation which suggests the summer heat. The inscription on the painting also makes an allusion to the fourth-century recluse-poet Tao Yuanming, as did Yu Zhiding's *Portrait of Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums*.<sup>83</sup> Wu Changshuo is resting his left arm on a stack of books, a typical emblem of a scholar. Nonetheless, Wu Changshuo's rotund belly, devoid of any trappings of refinement, conveys a vulgar feeling in the picture in contrast to the elegant air in the *Portrait of Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums*. Interest in the physical body in Chinese portraiture appeared to emerge among the Shanghai School painters. For example, Ren Xiong also painted his upper torso naked in his self-portrait (Fig. 23). The representation of the nude torso reveals a close relationship between Western pictorial practices and Shanghai School painting, and marks the Shanghai painters' break with traditional portraiture, in which the body was generally invisible, hidden under formulaically-rendered clothing.<sup>84</sup> The interest in depicting physical presence in Shanghai School portraits on the one hand expressed with genuine honesty the general humble origins of professional portraitists; on the other hand, it revealed the Shanghai painters' turn from the pursuit of ancient taste to a concern with people's daily life. Ren Bonian was a

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<sup>82</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 369.

<sup>83</sup> The inscription was written by Wu Changshuo. For an English translation of the inscription, see Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self*, p. 131.

<sup>84</sup> John Hay, 'The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?', in Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow eds, *Body, Subject, and Power in China* (1994, Chicago), pp. 42-77 (pp. 42-43).

representative of the Shanghai School. His portrait of his contemporary well-known painter in a populist way represents the close relationship between professional painting, Western art and mass culture in the painting of the Shanghai School.

Ren Bonian was also a professional painter of humble origins. He nevertheless won himself a prominent status in the art world of his day by integrating Western elements into his works to achieve a perfect Chinese visual realism, successfully combining Western pictorial novelties and traditional Chinese style in his portraits. Ren Bonian's achievements may have served to encourage Xu Beihong to become a lifelong proponent of realism in Chinese painting. Xu Beihong regarded Ren Bonian highly, considering him to be the best painter in Chinese art after the Ming professional master Qiu Ying (仇英, 1494-1552).<sup>85</sup> Throughout his life, Xu Beihong was enthusiastic about finding and collecting Ren Bonian's works.<sup>86</sup> After returning to China from Europe in 1927, Xu Beihong started to develop his artistic career by creating a large number of paintings on historical subjects in both Chinese ink and Western oils. Quite a few of Xu Beihong's history paintings are similar to Ren Bonian's in their subject and composition. For example, the Chinese sage *Lao Zi* riding on a bull in Xu Beihong's *Ziqi donglai* (紫氣東來, 'Purple Air Coming from the East', 1943) is similar to Ren Bonian's painting on the same theme (Figs 24-25). Xu Beihong's *Kongzi jiangxue* (孔子講學, 'Confucius Giving a Lecture', 1943) is probably inspired by Ren Bonian's *Sanyou tu* (三友圖, 'Three Friends', 1884) (Figs 26-27). The subject of lecturing on Chinese classics is often seen in

<sup>85</sup> Xu, 'Ren Bonian ping zhuan', p. 606. Qiu Ying was a professional artist but was associated closely with the literati circle of Suzhou, the heartland of refined culture and literati painting in the Ming dynasty. His high esteem in the literati circle with his profound professional skills has challenged the oversimplified dichotomy of literati-amateur and professional values in Chinese painting. See James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty* (New York and Tokyo, 1978), pp. 201-210.

<sup>86</sup> Xu, 'Ren Bonian pingzhuan', pp. 604-605.



Chinese figure painting, such as the paintings on this theme executed by the Ming professional artist Chen Hongshou (陳洪綬, 1598-1652) (Fig. 28). Moreover, Xu Beihong executed a history painting in Western oils based on the popular Chinese legend *Fengchen sanxia* (風塵三俠, 'Three Chivalrous Warriors') in the 1920s, and Ren Bonian also created several paintings on this theme (Figs 29-31). This story enjoyed great popularity among the Shanghai School painters and in their contemporary illustrated publications, such as Qian Huian's pupil, Lu Peng's (陸鵬) design for the manual *New Modes to Painting Manuals* (Fig. 32).

Xu Beihong's history paintings demonstrate Ren Bonian's influence, as well as the links between professional art and popular culture. The warriors, historical figures and fictional characters in Xu Beihong's creations are often seen in traditional prints or other professional artists' works. The ghost catcher, Zhong Kui, one of the favourite subjects in both Ren Bonian's and Xu Beihong's works, is a popular subject in Chinese folk art.<sup>87</sup> In the 1940s, Xu Beihong made several paintings on the theme of *Jiuge* (九歌, 'Nine Songs'), written by the patriotic poet Qu Yuan (屈原, 340-278 BC). *Nine Songs* were later collected in the anthology of ancient romantic Chinese poems, *Chuci* (楚辭, 'The Poetic Prose of the South'). The lady's gesture in the sketch *Xiang furen* (湘夫人, 'Mistress of Xiang') is reminiscent of the print on the same theme made by the Ming professional artist Chen Hongshou in 1616 (Figs 33-34).<sup>88</sup> Chen Hongshou was a professional artist who worked in close association with his

<sup>87</sup> Shih Shou-Chien, 'Ya su de jiaolü: Wen Zhengming, Zhong Kui yu dazhong wenhua' 雅俗的焦慮：文徵明、鍾馗與大眾文化, 'Anxiety about Refinement and Vulgarity: Wen Zhengming, Zhong Kui and Popular Culture', *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan*, 16 (2004), pp. 307-339.

<sup>88</sup> For a full display of Chen Hongshou's eleven illustrations of *Nine Songs*, see Wong Wange 翁萬戈 ed., *Chen Hongshou* 陳洪綬, 'Chen Hongshou: His Life and Art' (Shanghai, 1997), Vol. II, pp. 9-18.

contemporary publishing industry. Xu Beihong regarded him highly as one of a few masters in modern times of Chinese painting, with Ren Bonian and Wu Youru.<sup>89</sup> Xu Beihong once made a painting on the theme of the recluse-poet Tao Yuanming in 1948 (Fig. 35).<sup>90</sup> In the picture, Tao Yuanming is picking chrysanthemums. Xu Beihong also collected a painting on the same theme by Chen Hongshou, *Tao Yuanming zaiju tu* (陶淵明載菊圖, 'Tao Yuanming Bringing Chrysanthemums Home', ca 1649) (Fig. 36). Xu Beihong seems to have been very fond of this painting as he wrote an inscription on it in 1950. In the 1940s, Xu Beihong also made two Chinese beauty paintings based on the poem by the famous Tang poet Du Fu (杜甫, 712-770) (Fig. 37). The composition and subject of these two beauty paintings was also employed by the Shanghai School painters and illustrators, such as Qian Huian and Wu Youru (Fig. 38). An illustration of the same title and design was also published in *New Modes to Painting Manuals* (Fig. 39). The composition of these beauty paintings is very similar, seemingly derived from a conventional mode.

In addition to his father and Ren Bonian, Wu Youru also played a decisive role in the massive involvement of commercial art and popular culture in Xu Beihong's works. Xu Beihong first learnt to paint by imitating Wu Youru's illustrations daily. Wu Youru was a well-known artist in late nineteenth-century Shanghai. He quickly established his reputation in the press by being the principle illustrator of the *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報, 'Dianshi Studio Pictorial') and his own *Feiyingge huabao* (飛影閣畫報, 'Fleeting Shadow

<sup>89</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Lun Zhongguohua' 論中國畫, 'On Chinese Painting', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 357-364 (pp. 360-361). On Chen Hongshou's portraits and their relationship with realism and representation, see James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Massachusetts and London, 1982), pp. 106-145.

<sup>90</sup> There is a year name in Chinese terms on the lower right of the painting, saying 'Wu zi' (戊子), corresponding to 1948 of the Common Era.

Pavilion Pictorial').<sup>91</sup> The *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* was one of the most celebrated pictorials in late nineteenth-century China. The first issue of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* appeared in May 1884, as a supplement to the *Shenbao*, although it could also be purchased separately.<sup>92</sup> Both *Shenbao* and *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* were founded by the British merchants Ernest and Frederick Major, who controlled several enterprises in China in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>93</sup> The *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* enjoyed an immediate success with the aid of the wide circulation of *Shenbao*, which was launched in 1872 and could be obtained, outside Shanghai, in more than twenty places across China.<sup>94</sup> The *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* produced more than 4,500 illustrations between 1884 and 1898.<sup>95</sup> It was issued at intervals of ten days and each issue generally featured eight line drawings, illustrating items chosen from *Shenbao*. The illustrators' mastery of the vanishing perspective helped to lend a feeling of veracity to the quasi-journalistic, current affairs feature drawings of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*. Take as an example the illustration *Heyi huaya* (合議畫押, 'The Treaty-Signing Ceremony at the Conclusion of the Sino-French War', 1885), which represented the moment when the Chinese official Li Hongzhang (李鴻章, 1823-1901) signed the Sino-French treaty in July 1885 (Fig. 40). The employment of the vanishing perspective realistically represents a three-dimensional interior, and the interior is rendered in remarkable detail, as if

<sup>91</sup> A brief account of Wu Youru's life, see Yang Yi 楊逸, *Hai shang mo lin* 海上墨林, 'Painting and Calligraphy in Shanghai' (Shanghai, 1989), p. 78.

<sup>92</sup> Wang Er-min 王爾敏, 'Dianshizhai huabao suo zhanxian zhi jindai lishi mailuo' 點石齋畫報所展現之近代歷史脈絡, 'The Modern Historic Context Represented in the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*', in Huang Kewu 黃克武 ed., *Hua zhong you hua: Jindai Zhongguo de shijue biaoshu yu wenhua goutu* 畫中有話：近代中國的視覺表述與文化構圖, 'When Images Speak: Visual Representations and Cultural Mapping in Modern China' (Taipei, 2003), pp. 1-25 (pp. 4-5).

<sup>93</sup> Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life 1884-1898* (Michigan, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Wang, 'Dianshizhai huabao suo zhanxian zhi jindai lishi mailuo', p. 1. Wang Er-min in this article also argued that the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* ceased publication in 1900.

the illustrator had personally witnessed this significant event. The illustrators of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* were not the first in China to employ the Western use of perspective; nevertheless their predecessors had not yet completely mastered it as fully as they did.<sup>96</sup> Western perspective made great contributions to the popularity of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* in the hybrid visual culture of late nineteenth-century Shanghai. It not only helped to introduce Western knowledge to a wider readership in China, but also made the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* one of the most influential promoters of Western painting in China.<sup>97</sup>

Wu Youru was the most influential artist of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*.<sup>98</sup> The success of the *Pictorial* helped Wu Youru to reach the pinnacle of his career, and at the same time, Wu Youru's mastery of traditional Chinese fine-line drawing also made great contributions to the popularity of the *Pictorial*. Wu Youru then left the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* and founded his own *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial*. In each issue of the *Fleeting Shadow Pavilion Pictorial*, Wu Youru provided an illustration of a historical beauty, and these beauty images were later published under the title *Gujin baimei* (古今百美, 'One Hundred Beauties of History'), collected in the thirteen-volume corpus *Wu Youru huabao* (吳友如畫寶, 'A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations'), first published by the Wenruilou bookstore (文瑞樓) in Shanghai in 1908 (Fig. 41).<sup>99</sup> These beauties are elegantly rendered, clearly modelled on the previous printed

<sup>96</sup> Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*, p.25.

<sup>97</sup> Julia F. Andrews, 'Commercial Art and China's Modernization', in Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen eds, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York, 1998), pp. 181-192 (pp. 181-184).

<sup>98</sup> For realism and photography in Wu Youru's art practice, see Cho Shenko. 'Sheyingshu dui Zhongguo jindai xieshi huihua yingxiang zhi tantao - Yi Wu Youru xinwenhua weili' 攝影術對中國近代寫實繪畫影響之探討 - 以吳友如新聞畫為例, 'The Influence of Photography on Realistic Painting in Modern China - Wu Youru's Journalistic Illustrations as a Case Study' *Xiandai meishu xuebao*, 3 (2000), pp. 109-131.

<sup>99</sup> Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, 'Xie Guozhen ti Wu youru huabao' 謝國楨題吳友如畫寶, 'Xie Guozhen's Inscription to A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations', in *Wu Youru huabao* 吳友如畫寶, 'A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations' (Shanghai, 1983), Vol. I, p. 1.

works of this theme, such as the eighteenth-century *Baimei xinyong* (百美新詠, 'New Encomia to One Hundred Beauties') (Fig. 42).<sup>100</sup> Wu Youru's turn from the journalistic illustration of news and metropolitan life to the conservative depiction of traditional Chinese beauties seems to indicate his intention to claim the higher social status of a painter rather than an illustrator.<sup>101</sup> His move appears to have been successful as he was the only pictorial illustrator who was listed in the reference books on nineteenth-century Shanghai artists, and was included among the group of Shanghai School painters.<sup>102</sup> His accomplishments were even compared to those of the Ming professional artist Qiu Ying.<sup>103</sup> Wu Youru's illustrations of classical beauties are conservative compositions, bearing great similarities to those of his predecessors. Nonetheless, his mastery of Western perspective is evident in the three-dimensional space in the picture. A shift in spatial conception as a result of the use of Western pictorial practices has the classical figures in Wu Youru's illustrations with a modern face.

In addition to the beauty illustrations, other illustrations by Wu Youru were also included in the corpus *A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations*. These illustrations depicted a wide range of subjects and they were categorised under titles, such as *Haishang baiyan* (海上百艷, 'One Hundred Beauties of Shanghai'), *Gujin renwu* (古今人物, 'Figures of History') and *Gujin mingsheng* (古今名勝, 'Scenic Spots of History'), and so on. Before his corpus was published, Wu Youru's works had been often selected and published by different publishers.<sup>104</sup> The wide circulation of Wu Youru's illustrations in the market

<sup>100</sup> Hay, 'Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-Century China', p. 148.

<sup>101</sup> Hay, 'Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-Century China', p. 139.

<sup>102</sup> Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, 'Wu Youru huabao yinyan' 《吳友如畫寶》引言, 'Preface to *A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations*', in *Wu Youru huabao*, Vol. I, pp. 2-3.

<sup>104</sup> The artistic activities in Shanghai, including the publishing of Wu Youru's illustrations, as well as other Shanghai painters' works and related manuals, are listed in detail in Yen Chuan-ying 顏娟英 ed., *Shanghai meishu fengyun: 1872-1949 Shenbao yishu ziliao tiaomu suoyin* 上海美術

demonstrated their influence in Xu Beihong's works. Many of Xu Beihong's later history paintings appear to a certain degree to have been inspired by Wu Youru's illustrations of historical figures. Xu Beihong's *Huai Su xueshu* (懷素學書, 'Huai Su Learning Calligraphy on Banana Leaves', 1937) is an example; Ren Bonian also executed a painting on the same theme (Figs 43-44). Nonetheless, the gesture of Huai Su in Xu Beihong's work is closer to that in Wu Youru's illustration (Fig. 45). Moreover, Xu Beihong's draft *Hualong dianjing* (畫龍點睛, 'Putting the Finishing Touch to the Picture of a Dragon', 1922) and the large-scale history painting *Jiufang Gao* can both find similar images in Wu Youru's illustrations (Figs 46-48 & 2). The close relationship between Xu Beihong's history painting and professional art paved the way for his later endeavours to elevate the status of professional painting in the new framework of fine art of twentieth-century China.

Wu Youru's massive involvement in the journalism and publishing industry led to his illustrations reflecting the Western pictorial elements more directly than other Shanghai School painters' works did. Julia F. Andrews has remarked that Wu Youru's illustrations "may represent the shift in style and technology from innovation within Chinese tradition to a new, hybrid form of illustration that became typical of treaty-port Shanghai".<sup>105</sup> Through Wu Youru, Xu Beihong had been exposed to the novel Western pictorial practices in Shanghai since he started to learn painting. Later on, Xu Beihong continuously assimilated the latest Western art trends in China. The Western art influence manifested itself more obviously in Xu Beihong's early portraits than in Wu Youru's illustrations, indicating that Xu Beihong also learnt Western painting skills from the images

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風雲：1872-1949 申報藝術資料條目索引, 'Art in Shanghai, 1872-1949: An Index of Articles, Reviews, Advertisements, and News Items published in *Shenbao* Newspaper' (Taipei, 2006).

<sup>105</sup> Andrews and Shen, *A Century in Crisis*, p. 3.

published in other print media, such as images in books of pictures or on cigarette cards.<sup>106</sup> The close relationship between portraiture, Western art practices and commercial culture was further manifested in Xu Beihong's paintings and jobs during his stay in Shanghai between 1915 and 1917, which is the focus of the next section. With a background in professional art, Xu Beihong had demonstrated his mastery of some Western pictorial skills and his interest in Western art since the beginning of his career. The emphasis on visual verisimilitude in Chinese portraiture led to Xu Beihong's later pursuit of Western realism. More importantly, the re-evaluation of indigenous Chinese pictorial realism and professional art by the Shanghai intellectual circle, which will be elaborated in the final section of this chapter, was the key to Xu Beihong's adherence to realism.

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<sup>106</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 5.

## 2.3 Aspects of the Visual Culture of Shanghai

Xu Beihong first visited Shanghai in the winter of 1912 to seek opportunities for learning Western painting.<sup>107</sup> During his stay in the city, he submitted his illustration of *Shi Qian touji* (時遷偷雞, 'Shi Qian Stealing Chickens') for a competition and won the second prize (Fig. 49). His illustration was published in the newspaper *Shishi xinbao* (時事新報) on 31 December 1912.<sup>108</sup> Shi Qian was one of the 108 heroes in the classic Chinese novel of chivalry, *Shuihu zhuan* (水滸傳, 'Outlaws of the Marsh'), authorship of which has been attributed to Shi Naian (施耐庵, 1296-1372) and Luo Guanzhong (羅貫中, 1330-1400). The story about Shi Qian stealing chickens occurs in the forty-sixth chapter of the novel.<sup>109</sup> In Xu Beihong's picture, Shi Qian is rendered in the Chinese line-drawing style. He is holding a stick, about to perform a flip. His gesture, with the martial jacket, trousers and thin-soled ankle boots he wore, seems to represent the Shi Qian in the clown role of Chinese opera (Fig. 50).<sup>110</sup> The increasingly wide use of lithography had resulted in the popularity of lithographically-printed novels and popular literature.<sup>111</sup> Xu Beihong's choice of Shi Qian as a subject indicates his background as a professional artist who had been closely associated with the publishing business in the past. Moreover, Shi Qian in clown costume may reflect the thriving of traditional entertainment in line with the rise of Shanghai to the status of an opulent metropolis. In addition to Xu Beihong's illustration, other prize-winning works were published in the

<sup>107</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Shi Naian and Luo Quanzhong, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, trans. Sideny [sic] Shapiro (Beijing, 2003), pp. 1406-1410.

<sup>110</sup> On the role and costume of clown in Chinese opera, see Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes: the Visual Communication of Character and Culture* (Honolulu, 2008), pp. 16-17 & 329.

<sup>111</sup> Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow eds, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (California, 2005).



newspaper, and one of them also depicted Shi Qian (Fig. 51). The costume and movement of Shi Qian in these two pictures share a great similarity. One of the prize-winning works depicted a young man who has been beaten up and fallen to the ground (Fig. 52). Another shows a child passing through the central hole of a copper coin (Fig. 53). All of these pictures seemingly describe either people of low social status, or different facets of society, such as entertainment, social events and customs. Xu Beihong saw the competition advertised in the newspaper during his brief stay in Shanghai in the winter of 1912, reflecting the role of the printing industry and mass culture in Xu Beihong's art learning.

Xu Beihong's Chinese line-drawing illustration is reminiscent of Wu Youru's works for the news media. It indicates the close association between Xu Beihong's early learning and the burgeoning printing industry in the Shanghai area, which has been studied in the previous sections through the investigation into Xu Beihong's early learning and the Shanghai artists. The blooming publishing industry not only brought artists great opportunities for success, but also made paintings of the previous and present artists, as well as imported Western pictures, accessible to the general public. A wide range of advertisements for the publishing of painting manuals, the prices for artists' works and the display of private art collections frequently appeared in the newspapers.<sup>112</sup> A large number of advertisements selling oil paintings and Western artefacts also appeared in the newspaper *Shenbao* in the 1870s, immediately after the newspaper was launched in 1872.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Western pictorial images were also made accessible to the public by means of reproductions of them made by illustrators. For example, the thirty-eighth issue

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<sup>112</sup> Yen, *Shanghai meishu fengyun*.

<sup>113</sup> Yen Chuan-ying, '1872-1911 *Shenbao* yishu tiaomu suoyin' 1872-1911 《申報》藝術條目索引, 'An Index of Articles, Reviews, Advertisements, and News Items Published in *Shenbao* Newspaper from 1872 to 1911', *Renwen xuebao*, 26 (2002), pp. 1-47 (p. 5)

of *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* mentioned the eighteenth President of the United States, General Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), in order to introduce Western democracy to the Chinese readership (Fig. 54). The illustration which Wu Youru made for this news item was copied directly from the image of the ill General Grant published on the front cover of the American political magazine *Harper's Weekly* (Fig. 55).<sup>114</sup> Xu Beihong's portraits, which demonstrated more significant Western pictorial features than those of his father and Wu Youru as discussed above, can be more readily understood in the context of these hybrid cultural conditions under which he grew up.

Shanghai had risen to be the most westernised modern city in China after it was opened to trade with the West after the Opium War. Many facilities of modern urban life were introduced into Shanghai after that. Banks were introduced in Shanghai in 1848, gaslight in 1865, the telephone in 1881, electricity in 1882, automobiles in 1901 and trams 1908.<sup>115</sup> These Western and modern forms of equipment appeared in Shanghai when the inhabitants still wore gowns and little round caps, with bald foreheads and long pigtails, in the ordinary costume of the imperial Qing dynasty, just like the figures in Xu Beihong's *The Elderly* (Fig. 11). The impressive innovations of Western civilisation mingled with a traditional Chinese life style to constitute a hybrid environment for Shanghai residents. This hybrid phenomenon was represented in the paintings of the Shanghai School, in the way that the experience of spectacle and the opulence of material culture was coded under the traditional pictorial subjects and practices.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, the exciting experience of hybridity and

<sup>114</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>115</sup> Tang Zhenchang 唐振常, *Jindai Shanghai fanhual* 近代上海繁華錄, 'A Record of the Bustling and Flourishing of Modern Shanghai' (Hong Kong, 1993), p. 240.

<sup>116</sup> Hay, 'Painting and the Built Environment in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai'; Lai, 'Remapping Borders'.

modernity in Shanghai was also recorded by the men of letters in their diaries. Wang Xiqi (王錫麒, 1855-1913) passed through Shanghai during his trip to Beijing in 1879 and he recorded the magnificent aspect of Shanghai in his diary. While he was in Shanghai, Wang Xiqi went on a sightseeing tour of the foreign settlements, where the traffic was heavy and noisy. At night, there were hundreds of thousands of gas lamps sparkling like stars. The several-storeys high Western buildings were as gorgeous as the palaces.<sup>117</sup> One high-ranking Qing officer, Yao Jinyuan (姚觀元, ?-1883), recorded his sojourn in Shanghai from 1879 to 1884 in his *Gongzhai riji* (弓齋日記, 'Diary of the Gong Studio'). On 6 March 1879, Yao Jinyuan and his friends "took photographs at the *Sanxing* (三興) studio" and after a meal, they went shopping at the foreign stores. On 12 May 1884, Yao Jinyuan went to see the Western printing equipment at the Tongwen Bookstore (同文書局), the first Chinese-run publisher to employ lithography.<sup>118</sup> Then he paid a visit to a private collection of traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. Besides, he was also interested in visiting the Chinese teahouses as well as the Western painting exhibitions.<sup>119</sup> Yao Jinyuan was a typical Qing official-scholar, who was renowned for his literary accomplishments. He enjoyed highbrow cultural activities and, at the same time, he also sought more exotic entertainment. His life well exemplified the hybrid culture in Shanghai.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Wang Xiqi, 'Beixing riji' 北行日記, 'Diary of the Trip to the North', in *Qingdai riji huichao* 清代日記匯抄, 'A Digest of Diaries of the Qing Dynasty' (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 332.

<sup>118</sup> Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛, 'Shanghai xueyi gaiyao (er)' 上海學藝概要 (二), 'An Outline of the Artistic Activities in Shanghai (II)', *Shanghai Tongzhiguan qikan* 上海通志館期刊, 1. 2 (1933), pp. 499-538 (pp. 523-524), reprinted in Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 ed., *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan xuzi* 近代中國史料叢刊續輯, 'Sequel to the Digest of Historical Materials of Modern China', Vol. XXXIX (Taipei, 1977). The missionary *Tushanwan* organisation was the earliest to employ lithography in China, but only published works for religious purposes. The *Dianshi Studio* publisher, founded by the British merchants Ernest and Frederick Major, was the first foreign publisher to print a variety of non-religious publications lithographically in China.

<sup>119</sup> *Qingdai riji huichao*, pp. 339-352.

<sup>120</sup> For the various lifestyles of traditional Chinese men of letters in Shanghai, see Catherine Vance Yeh, 'The Life-Style of Four Wenren in Late Qing Shanghai', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 57.2 (1997), pp. 419-470; also Yeh, 'Image Makers: The Settlements' Men of Letters and Shanghai Print Entertainment', in Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals and*

Photography was a convincing manifestation of the exotic entertainment and hybrid life style in Shanghai. Since around 1860, when photography had been introduced to the Shanghai area from the earlier treaty ports such as Hong Kong and Guangzhou, taking photographs had become a fashionable and popular pastime for the people of Shanghai.<sup>121</sup> Its impact on Chinese portraiture was profound, in the way that it gradually changed people's perception of realism and portraiture in China.<sup>122</sup> The renowned Chinese critic and journalist, Wang Tao (王韜, 1828-1879), even referred to photography as *xiezhen*, the traditional term for portraiture.<sup>123</sup> It was not difficult to find comments in the newspapers or literati diaries that valued the superiority of photography over traditional portraiture in terms of mimesis.<sup>124</sup> As a consequence, many traditional portraiture businesses broadened their services to include photographic portraits. According to Régine Thiriez's study, photography changed the making of traditional ancestor portraiture, in the way that the body and the chair in an ancestor portrait was still painted in the traditionally formulaic manner, while the head was copied from a photograph, or was even cut out of a photograph and affixed to the portrait painting. This mixture of photography and painting became widely popular in particular in the image making of the commercial market.<sup>125</sup>

The photographic verisimilitude in Xu Beihong's portrayed figures, such as in his portrait of Kang Youwei in celebration of the latter's sixtieth birthday, reflects the degree of popularity of Western-derived pictorial practices and media

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*Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910* (Seattle and London, 2006), pp. 178-219.

<sup>121</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp. 57-59. Photography was imported into China as early as 1850s. The earliest record of photography in China was seen in the *Guangdong zashu* (廣東雜述, 'Random Notes of Guangdong'), written by Zhou Shouchang (周壽昌) during his trip to Guangdong Province, whose capital was the treaty port, Guangzhou. Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhua shi*, p. 375.

<sup>122</sup> Régine Thiriez, 'Photography and Portraiture in Nineteenth-Century China', *East Asian History*, 17/18 (1999), 77-102.

<sup>123</sup> Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p. 320.

<sup>124</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhua shi*, pp. 375-376.

<sup>125</sup> Thiriez, 'Photography and Portraiture in Nineteenth-Century China', pp. 99-102.

in Shanghai and nearby regions by Xu Beihong's time (Fig. 13). In the painting, the heads of the figures are rendered realistically, as if converted directly from photographs. In addition to Kang Youwei, most of the figures' heads are out of proportion with their bodies. Their faces were photographically realistic, while their bodies were thin and proportionally smaller, without obvious indication of physical volume. Xu Beihong possibly portrayed their faces either directly or with the aid of photographs and then painted their dressed bodies according to the images in popular publications or advertising posters. Showing feminine images with incorrect proportions for their figures was common in the beauties depicted in early advertisement poster painting, such as *Wanzhuang* (晚妝, 'Evening Makeup', 1914), made by the renowned commercial artist Zheng Mantuo (鄭曼陀, 1888-1961) (Fig. 56). The incorrectly-proportioned figures reveal a decorative taste. Although photographic realism grew more popular in China in the 1910s, Western painting still found broad acceptance in the Chinese commercial market as chic modernity rather than as a counterpart to Chinese painting. Moreover, the figures in Xu Beihong's painting were much bigger in comparison with the garden setting, making the figures seem to jut out from the picture's surface. This seems to give the impression that the garden background is artificial. After photography came to Shanghai, customers posing before an artificial backdrop in the studio became a fashion in the making of indoor photographic portraits, as is represented in Wu Youru's illustration (Fig. 57). Wu Youru depicted two women, one sitting and the other standing, in front of a screen with Western architectural elements on it. The perspective in the backdrop screen had to be very precise in order to create the illusion that the women had been photographed inside a splendid Western style house instead of in a studio. Xu Beihong's portrait of Kang Youwei was perhaps executed according to a

photograph which Kang Youwei and his family had had taken in a studio in celebration of his birthday, while the garden setting of the photograph was in fact an artificial backdrop supplied by the studio.

With the great popularity that photography enjoyed in China, it increasingly replaced traditional portraiture to become the preferred choice for making portraits among the urban dwellers in the treaty cities.<sup>126</sup> The flourishing of photography businesses caused a growing demand for the making of backdrops. In addition to their work for individual customers, the art studios produced a considerable number of backdrops in a variety of styles to cater for the great demand from the blooming publishing and tobacco enterprises in Shanghai. The import of lithography along with the publishing of *Shenbao* and *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* brought to China new Western printing technology as well as the practices of the Western press, such as including advertisement pages in the press and issuing calendars as gifts for customers.<sup>127</sup> Advertising became an important source of income for the press.<sup>128</sup> This produced a tighter relationship between the commercial and publishing industries in China and as a result led to a huge demand for advertisement calendar posters. Later on, tobacco companies accelerated the growth of advertising business and consequently caused the zenith of the production of advertisement calendar posters in Shanghai.<sup>129</sup> These advertising posters gave rise to a renewed interest in the beauty genre. With the popularity of photography and the advertising aims of calendar posters, the

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<sup>126</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 376.

<sup>127</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp 18-19, 55.

<sup>128</sup> Wu Fangcheng 吳方正, 'Wanqing sishinian Shanghai shijue wenhua de jige mianxiang – Yi Shenbao ziliao weizhu kan tuxiang de jixie fuzhi' 晚清四十年上海視覺文化的幾個面向 – 以申報資料為主看圖像的機械複製, 'Aspects in Shanghai Visual Culture during the last 40 years of the Qing Dynasty – the Mechanical Reproduction of Images in the *Shenbao*', *Renwen xuebao*, 26 (2002), pp. 49-95 (pp. 51-52).

<sup>129</sup> Chen Chaonan 陳超南 and Feng Yiyou 馮懿有, *Old Advertisements and Popular Culture: Posters, Calendars and Cigarettes, 1900-1950* (San Francisco, 2004).

female images in this kind of painting were generally photographically illustrated and commercialised.<sup>130</sup> To produce different types of women from classical beauties to the modern women depicted in posters, artists would rely on the photographers' studios to supply different kinds of settings and props for the portrayed women to pose with. Thus, the demand for backdrops increased rapidly as a result of the flourishing of the advertising industry in a vigorously commercialised Shanghai. At the same time, the proliferation of photographically illustrated and lithographically printed objects on the market and in people's daily lives gradually changed the conventions of image making as well as people's visual habits in Shanghai.

The demand for photographic backdrops was so great that Zhou Xiang (周湘, 1871-1933) established an art school, the Training Institute of Backdrop Painting (*Bujinghua chuanxisuo* 佈景畫傳習所) in 1911, especially to teach backdrop painting.<sup>131</sup> The Westernised artist Chen Baoyi (陳抱一, 1893-1945) once registered at this school. He recalled that it was a three-month programme. What Zhou Xiang taught was how to paint backdrops with Western perspective, and his watercolour painting was full of Chinese taste.<sup>132</sup> The Westernised artist Wang Yachen (汪亞塵, 1894-1983) also recalled that students at that school learnt watercolour painting and depicted hybrid subject matter.<sup>133</sup> In addition to this school devoted specially to making backdrops, Zhou Xiang also founded the

<sup>130</sup> Yingjin Zhang, 'Artwork, Commodity, Event: Representations of the Female Body in Modern Chinese Pictorials' in Kuo, *Visual Culture in Shanghai 1850s-1930s*, pp. 121-162.

<sup>131</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 358.

<sup>132</sup> Chen Baoyi, 'Yanhua yundong guocheng lueji' 洋畫運動過程略記, 'An Outline of the Western-Style Painting Movement', *Shanghai yishu yuekan* 上海藝術月刊, 6 (1942), pp. 117-120 (p. 118). The whole article was continuously published in the *Shanghai yishu yuekan* from the fifth issue to the twentieth issue. It was later re-published as 'Yanhua zai Zhongguo liuchuan de guocheng' 洋畫在中國流傳的過程, 'The Spread of Western-Style Painting in China', *Yishujia*, 35 (1978), pp. 19-42.

<sup>133</sup> Wang Yachen, 'Sishi zishu' 四十自述, 'Wang Yachen in His Own Words at 40', in Wang Zhen and Rong Junli 榮君立 eds, *Wang Yachen yishu wenji* 汪亞塵藝術文集, 'A Collection of Wang Yachen's Essays on Art' (Shanghai, 1990), pp. 1-11 (p. 3).

Shanghai Oil Painting Institute (*Shanghai youhuayuan* 上海油畫院) in 1910, offering a variety of courses including oil painting, watercolour, pencil drawing, and other styles.<sup>134</sup> In addition, Zhou Xiang also offered intensive courses, designed for students who wished to equip themselves with the latest skills in Western portraiture as quickly as possible.<sup>135</sup> To attract more students, the Shanghai Oil Painting Institute also offered a distance-learning course, and students who enrolled on this course would receive Zhou Xiang's watercolour manuals with detailed descriptions of how to paint them.<sup>136</sup> Zhou Xiang's schools provided courses which apparently catered for the demands of commercial advertisement poster painting industry, such as painted backdrops, photographically-illustrated portraits, and watercolours, which demonstrated the popularity of photographic realism as well as the close relationship between Western painting and the commercial market at that time.

Zhou Xiang was the earliest Chinese artist to establish Western painting schools in Shanghai.<sup>137</sup> At the opening ceremony of Zhou Xiang's art schools in 1910, several eminent reform-minded intellectuals attended, including Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Wu Zhihui (吳稚暉, 1865-1953).<sup>138</sup> Their friendship stemmed from their participation in the Hundred Days' Reform, the national reform movement of the imperial Qing which existed from June to September 1898; Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were both among the leaders of that

<sup>134</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 357.

<sup>135</sup> Wu Fangcheng, 'Xiyang huihua de Zhongguo zaiquanshi – You *Shenbao* ziliao kan Zhongguo xiandaihua de yixie shijue mianxiang' 西洋繪畫的中國再詮釋 – 由申報資料看中國現代化的一些視覺面向, 'Re-interpretation of Western Painting in Chinese Manner – Looking at some Visual Aspects of Modernization in China from *Shenbao*', *Renwen xuebao*, 25(2002), pp. 133-158 (pp. 146-147).

<sup>136</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 358.

<sup>137</sup> Yen Chuan-ying, 'Buxi de biandong – Yi Shanghai meishu xuexiao wei zhongxin de meishu jiaoyu yundong' 不息的變動 – 以上海美術學校為中心的美術教育運動, 'The Persistent Change – the Art Education Movement Centred on the Shanghai Art Schools', in Yen, *Shanghai meishu fengyun*, pp. 47-117 (pp. 49-50).

<sup>138</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 358.



movement.<sup>139</sup> Xu Beihong paid several visits to Zhou Xiang when he was in Shanghai. He asked Huang Jingwan (黃警頑) to introduce him to Zhou Xiang.<sup>140</sup> Huang Jingwan worked at the Commercial Press and offered Xu Beihong a great deal of help during Xu Beihong's period in Shanghai.<sup>141</sup> Huang Jingwan later recalled that Zhou Xiang left a good impression on Xu Beihong. They talked cheerfully for the whole afternoon of their first meeting. Zhou Xiang had a comprehensive knowledge of Western art history. He showed them his own works and gave Xu Beihong several catalogues of Western painting. From Huang Jingwan's account, Zhou Xiang appeared to have won himself a reputation in the field of Western painting in Shanghai, although he first established his reputation in the art world by his accomplishments in the traditional realms of Chinese painting and calligraphy.<sup>142</sup> Huang Jingwan's account also indicates that Xu Beihong had paid attention to the activities of the Shanghai's art world, in particular the strand of Western art, before he arrived there.

Some studies have argued that Xu Beihong took courses at Zhou Xiang's schools.<sup>143</sup> Most resources, however, indicate that Xu Beihong registered at the

<sup>139</sup> Yen, 'Buxi de biandong', pp. 49-50. On the Reform Movement of 1898, see Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pp. 224-230.

<sup>140</sup> Huang Jingwan, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yiduan jingli' 回憶徐悲鴻在上海的一段經歷, 'A Recollection of Xu Beihong's Experiences in Shanghai', in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji*, Vol. I, pp. 28-34 (p. 31).

<sup>141</sup> Xu Beihong received a great deal of help from Huang Jingwan and Huang Zhenzhi (黃震之) in Shanghai. Huang Jingwan introduced several job opportunities to Xu Beihong. He also paid the tuition fee for a French language course for Xu Beihong. In appreciation of two Mr Huang's help, Xu Beihong once named himself 'Huang Fu' (黃扶). Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 10.

<sup>142</sup> Zhou Xiang was first renowned for his works of Chinese painting and calligraphy. He did not learn Western painting until he lived in exile in Japan and Europe after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in which he had participated. Zhu Boxiong 朱伯雄 and Chen Ruilin 陳瑞林, *Zhongguo xihua wushi nian* 中國西畫五十年, 'Fifty Years of Western Painting in China' (Beijing, 1989), p. 35.

<sup>143</sup> Yao Xu 姚旭 and Zhou Yezhen 周葉振, 'Zhongguo meishu jiaoyu de qianqu - Zhou Xiang' 中國美術教育的前驅 - 周湘, 'Zhou Xiang - the Pioneer of Art Education in China', in *Jiading wenshi ziliao*, 嘉定文史資料, 'Cultural and Historical Archives of Jiading' (Shanghai, 1993), Vol. VIII, pp. 67-72 (p. 69).

Shanghai Art Academy (*Shanghai meizhuan* 上海美專), the art institute which was set up by Liu Haisu (劉海粟, 1896-1994) in 1912.<sup>144</sup> Xu Beihong's photograph was published in the June 1919 issue of *Meishu*, the bulletin of the Shanghai Art Academy, as an honorary alumnus of the Academy who had won a governmental scholarship to study art in France (Fig. 58). Liu Haisu often mentioned Xu Beihong as an alumnus of the Shanghai Art Academy, though Xu Beihong denied it.<sup>145</sup> The founding members of the Shanghai Art Academy, such as Liu Haisu, Chen Baoyi and Wu Shiguang (烏始光, 1885-?), all studied painting with Zhou Xiang. To compete with Zhou Xiang's schools, they appointed Zhang Yuguang (張聿光, 1885-1968) as director of the Academy in 1914.<sup>146</sup> Zhang Yuguang was an influential artist in the Shanghai of his day, and pursued multiple careers.<sup>147</sup> He won himself a reputation in the commercial art world in Shanghai by making backdrops for photography shops and theatres. From 1908, Zhang Yuguang painted scenery for the New World Theatre (*Xinwutai* 新舞台), which opened in 1908 to promote reformed Beijing opera and to perform Western plays.<sup>148</sup> Zhang Yuguang's role as a reform-minded artist was also manifested in his contribution of political cartoons to the press (Fig. 59). Later, Zhang Yuguang and Xu Beihong became colleagues at the National Central University in 1929.

The Shanghai Art Academy dominated the art education field in Shanghai in the 1910s. It also offered courses similar to those of Zhou Xiang's art schools, such as pencil drawing, watercolour and oil painting. The Shanghai Art Academy also emphasised that it offered courses on Western photography and

<sup>144</sup> Yen, 'Buxi de biandong', p. 47.

<sup>145</sup> Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu had bitter disputes on this event in 1932. They published announcements in the *Shenbao*. For these announcements, see Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, p. 52.

<sup>146</sup> Yen, 'Buxi de biandong', p. 59.

<sup>147</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp. 139-143.

<sup>148</sup> Li, *Zhongguo zaoqi youhuashi*, p. 360.

advertisement painting. Besides, its courses were intensive, designed for students who wished to obtain a certificate and find a related job as quickly as possible.<sup>149</sup> The courses on the one hand demonstrated how great the demand for photography and related pictorial practices in the market was; on the other hand, it revealed that Western-style painting was valued in China only for its practical and commercial value at that time. The essence of Western art seemingly had not yet been recognised. The teaching resources at the Shanghai Art Academy were catalogues of Western art, calendar posters and painted cards, mostly items of commercial art; and students learnt painting by means of copying the images from these posters and from books of pictures. Zhou Xiang and Liu Haisu's art schools demonstrated that Western painting in Shanghai was more associated with the commercial cultural market rather than with the fine art institutes. The art schools trained students with teaching materials taken from the commercial market, and the graduates in turn continued to join the commercial image making of the blooming cultural market.

The curriculum of the Shanghai art schools revealed that the dissemination of Western painting in China in the early twentieth century was entangled with commercially-driven cultural production, in which photographic realism gained great popularity. In this period, Western painting was valued for its practical functions and its realistic renderings of the objective world, instead of its aesthetic value. Chen Baoyi indicated that this period was the initial stage of a Western-style painting movement in China. 'Drawing from life', the essential vehicle for learning painting in the West, did not find acceptance among the Shanghai art schools.<sup>150</sup> The popularity of Western painting in this period lay in its commercial value and practical function rather than in aesthetic appreciation;

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<sup>149</sup> Yen, 'Buxi de biandong', pp. 54-55.

<sup>150</sup> Chen, 'Yanghua yundong guocheng lueji', *Shanghai yishu yuekan*, 7-8 (1942), pp. 144-146.

consequently, the school curriculum provided intensive courses, aiming to equip students with the basic techniques of Western realism within a short time. Accordingly, those who were interested in learning Western painting were generally aiming at getting jobs rather than acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of Western art.

With their massive involvement in the cultural market, commercial artists not only established fame as the early generation of the Western-style painting movement in China, but were able to pursue multiple careers. They participated in art education, publishing enterprises and the entertainment industry, so that their influence was far-reaching. Xu Beihong also later praised highly the contributions of Zhou Xiang, Zhang Yuguang, Liu Haisu and Xu Yongqing (徐詠青, 1880-1953) to the new art movement in China.<sup>151</sup> Xu Yongqing was also a well-known watercolourist of his day (Fig. 60). His reputation came from his massive involvement in the commercial art world in Shanghai. He worked as an art editor of *Shenbao* and also provided designs for several publications. Moreover, he also taught art courses and provided drawings for school textbooks, such as the six-volume *Zhongxueyong qianbi huatie* (中學用鉛筆畫帖, 'Manual of Pencil-Drawing Models for Middle School Students'), on which he collaborated with the Japanese artist Odake Takunobu (尾竹卓布), and which was published by the Commercial Press.<sup>152</sup> Xu Yongqing headed the art department of the Commercial Press, which opened in 1913. Huang Jingwan and Xu Yongqing both worked for the Commercial Press. With their aid, Xu Beihong was able to make the acquaintance of Zhou Xiang.

The hybrid painting style of these commercial artists, which combined

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<sup>151</sup> Xu, 'Xinyishu yundong zhi huigu yu qianzhan', p. 429.

<sup>152</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp. 127-128. The Commercial Press was a leading publisher in the textbook market in the early twentieth century. For an account of this publisher, see Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis, 2006), pp. 42-51.

Western pictorial elements and Chinese taste, was popular among the public. As early as 1911, a critic praised the visual verisimilitude in the paintings of Xu Yongqing and Zhang Yuguang in an article published under the pen name 'Xiang Ke' (湘客).<sup>153</sup> The writer argued that the visual realism in their paintings was achieved by means of the Western pictorial practices which existed in photographic backdrop painting. Xiang Ke further approved the superiority of Western and Japanese painting over Chinese painting in their ability of rendering light and shade. Zhang Yuguang and other Western-style painters remained popular into the 1920s. An article which was published in the 1923 *Shenbao* listed the masters of modern Chinese painting, including Zhang Yuguang and Zheng Mantuo, and so on; almost all of them were well-known commercial calendar poster painters.<sup>154</sup> With their mastery of photographic realism, the commercial artists were able to pursue multiple careers beyond the boundaries of commercial and fine art. At the same time, the various roles of a commercial artist in the art world also reflected the fact that photographic realism was so popular that it was pervasive in people's daily life. Its popularity thus gradually changed Chinese people's visual habits and developed their appreciation of realism. The fame of commercial artists indicated that Western-style painting became more and more significant in China after 1910s.

Xu Beihong's career also took advantage of the popularity of photographic realism. He taught *tuhua* (圖畫, 'painting' or 'drawing and painting') courses at Pengcheng Middle School (彭城中學), Shiqi Girls' School (始齊女校), and Yixing primary Normal School (宜興初級師範) in 1913 and 1914.<sup>155</sup> *Tuhua* was added to all levels of the school curriculum in China in 1902 in response to

<sup>153</sup> Wu, 'Xiyang huihua de Zhongguo zaiquanshi', p. 147.

<sup>154</sup> Wu, 'Xiyang huihua de Zhongguo zaiquanshi', p. 148.

<sup>155</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 7.

the national call for modernisation modelled on Western science and technology.<sup>156</sup> Thus, Xu Beihong was well placed to take up these teaching positions with his skill in realistic rendering, which was manifested in his photographically-illustrated portraits. His painting skill and the course of his career in turn demonstrated that Western realism was valued to a certain level in China's educational field at that time. To pursue more artistic achievements, Xu Beihong went to Shanghai again in 1915. He first sought work at the Commercial Press, and his figure paintings got him an opportunity to provide designs for the textbooks published by the Commercial Press, though this job was cancelled later for some unknown reason.<sup>157</sup> In addition, Xu Beihong made a *Guanyin* Bodhisattva painting for a book cover and some illustrations for the Chinese *gongfu* book, *Tantui tushuo* (譚腿圖說, 'Illustrations of Chinese Kicks'), published by the Zhonghua Bookstore (中華書局). Moreover, during his stay in Shanghai, Xu Beihong also made the acquaintance of the leaders of the innovative Lingnan School, Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng.<sup>158</sup> Xu Beihong's mastery of photographic realism and his background as a professional artist enable him to develop his artistic career by taking up multiple jobs in the educational and publishing fields.

Xu Beihong's friendship with the Gao brothers during his time in Shanghai was of significance in relation to his later perception of realism as the embodiment of national spirit and an indispensable component of new culture building. To seek job opportunities at the Aesthetic Bookstore (*Shenmei shuguan* 審美書館), Xu Beihong painted for the Gao brothers a set of four beauty

<sup>156</sup> Kao, 'Reforms in Education and the Beginning of the Western-Style Painting Movement in China'.

<sup>157</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 8.

<sup>158</sup> On the Lingnan School, see Ralph Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951* (Berkeley and London, 1988).

paintings, a typical subject of traditional Chinese New Year painting and then popular theme of calendar posters. Huang Jingwan recalled that it was he who introduced Xu Beihong to the Gao brothers. At first, Xu Beihong was unwilling to make the commercial calendar paintings that the Gao brothers required.<sup>159</sup> According to a pupil of Gao Jianfu, Xu Beihong frequently made calendar poster beauty paintings at that time, and that Gao Jianfu had been impressed by his talent and employed him to work at the Aesthetic Bookstore.<sup>160</sup> Although these accounts are not completely coincident, both reveal that the relationship between Xu Beihong and the Lingnan School at that time had a commercial aspect. More importantly, it appears that Xu Beihong's photographically-illustrated figure paintings had helped him to be successful in entering at least the commercial art world in Shanghai.

Xu Beihong's autobiography claims that he had apparently known the Gao brothers before Huang Jingwan's introduction. In Xu Beihong's own words, he made the acquaintance of the Gao brothers because he sent them a horse painting he had done and by this means got their approval. To earn money, Xu Beihong then made four beauty paintings for the Aesthetic Bookstore. Gao Jianfu regarded Xu Beihong's horse painting as a better work than those of Han Gan (韓幹, ca 706-783), the master of horse painting in the Tang dynasty (618-907) (Fig. 61).<sup>161</sup> There exists a horse painting that Xu Beihong did in 1919 (Fig. 62). Three horses are depicted standing under a huge pine tree. Their front hoofs are lifted slightly, suggesting that they are either about to run or have just stopping galloping. They are carefully rendered with fine-line drawing and rich layers of

<sup>159</sup> Huang, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yiduan jingli', p. 30.

<sup>160</sup> Jian Youwen 簡又文, 'Geming huajia Gao Jianfu – Gailun ji nianbiao (Zhong)' 革命畫家高劍父 – 概論及年表 (中), 'The Revolutionary Painter Gao Jianfu – Introduction and Chronology: Part II', *Zhuanji wenxue* 傳記文學, 22. 2 (1973), pp. 83-91 (p. 88).

<sup>161</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', pp. 6-7.

colours. The style is different from that typical of Xu Beihong's later horse painting, which is generally rendered with bold ink wash and expressive brushwork (Fig. 1). Instead, this early horse painting is reminiscent of those of the Italian Jesuit artist, Lang Shining (郎世寧, Giuseppe Castiglione, 1688-1766) (Fig. 63). His hybrid painting, successfully incorporating Western realism into Chinese subject matter, made him a renowned painter at the Qing court.<sup>162</sup> Xu Beihong saw Lang Shining's *Songxian yingzhi tu* (嵩獻英芝圖, 'White Hawk and Glossy Ganoderma', 1724) at an exhibition of painting and calligraphy in the Beijing Wenhua palace in 1918, and praised its exquisite realism (Fig. 64).<sup>163</sup> Xu Beihong mentioned in his article 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting' that his paintings were often compared to those of Lang Shining.<sup>164</sup> The realism in Lang Shining's painting was highly praised by the reform-minded official Kang Youwei, who made the acquaintance of Xu Beihong in Shanghai in 1916 and had a profound influence on him.<sup>165</sup> Hence, the gradual shift from the Shanghai commercial art taste to Lang Shining's realism in Xu Beihong's early works may result from Kang Youwei's influence. Xu Beihong and Kang Youwei's close relationship will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Xu Beihong's horse painting of 1919 was similar to Lang Shining's in style. Nevertheless, the painstaking realism of the horses also possibly came from Xu Beihong's frequent copying of the painted cards that he collected from cigarette

<sup>162</sup> Waley-Cohen, 'Diplomats, Jesuits and Foreign Curiosities'.

<sup>163</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Ping Wenhuan suocang shuhua' 評文華殿所藏書畫, 'Comments on the Painting and Calligraphy Collection in the Wenhua Palace', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 31-38.

<sup>164</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa' 中國畫改良之方法, 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 39-45 (p.45).

<sup>165</sup> Kang Youwei, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu' 萬木草堂藏畫目, 'Catalogue of Painting Collection of the Thatched Hut of Ten Thousand Trees', in Shen Songxin 申松欣 and Li Guojun 李國俊 eds, *Kang Youwei xiansheng moji congkan: Er* 康有為先生墨跡叢刊 (二), 'Compilation of Kang Youwei's calligraphic works: Vol. II' (Henan, 1983), p. 120.



packets. Xu Beihong later recalled that he liked to collect cigarette cards with animal images.<sup>166</sup> The most obvious manifestation of Xu Beihong's admiration for the Gao brothers perhaps lay in the tiger painting he made in 1918 as a gift to Ma Shuping (馬叔平, 1881-1955), a renowned scholar of epigraphy (Fig. 65).<sup>167</sup> The tiger is realistically rendered with ink and watercolour, reminiscent of those in the paintings of the Gao brothers (Fig. 66). Nonetheless, Xu Beihong's tiger is less ferocious than the Gaos'. Unlike the nationalist implications coded in the fierce beasts in the works of the Gao brothers, Xu Beihong seems to have paid more attention to pictorial subjects and practices. Like the 1919 horse painting, the realistic rendering and watercolour style used in Xu Beihong's tiger painting demonstrates that Xu Beihong's early pictorial practices were in close association with the conventions of commercial art. Xu Beihong's animal paintings demonstrate again how Western art had spread in China in the early twentieth century. The images and objects on the commercial market seemingly became the most common vehicles for Chinese artists to learn Western painting.

Named after the area from which the artists came from – Canton, to the 'South' of the 'Five Ranges', the Lingnan School was founded by three Cantonese artists, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and Chen Shuren (陳樹人, 1884-1948), who were among the first generation of young Chinese artists who were attracted by the successful Westernised modernisation of Japan and thus pursued art studies there from as early as 1906. The Lingnan School featured a new form of Chinese painting, integrating Western modelling after nature and atmospheric effects into traditional subject matter such as birds, landscapes and animals. Animals in dramatic or forceful gestures against romantic settings such as moonlit nights or snow scenes, rendered with careful shading and rich layers

<sup>166</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> *Gugong bowuyuan cang jinxindai shuhua mingjia zuopinji: Xu Beihong*, p. 24.

of colours, represented the influence from the refined combination of realism and romanticism in late Meiji Japanese painting, in particular the Shijō School.<sup>168</sup>

The Lingnan School artists promoted 'New National Painting' (*Xinguohua* 新國畫), claiming that the Lingnan School's aim was to reform old national painting and create new national painting in order to modernise Chinese painting.<sup>169</sup>

They endowed painting with a nationalistic ideology, emphasising their belief that art should be treated as "an integral part of, and a stimulus to, national rejuvenation".<sup>170</sup> The radical attitude of the Lingnan School manifested itself in Gao Jianfu's depiction of modern objects in his ink paintings, such as aeroplanes, cars and telegraph poles (Fig. 67). For them, art should be modernised to be capable of faithfully representing the realities of the outside world in order to participate in the building of the new nation. For them, the social-political and artistic roles were not incompatible. Thus, the leading members of the Lingnan School actively participated in revolts against the imperial Manchu regime and helped to establish a new republican nation. Consequently, the Lingnan School artists occupied an important place in modern Chinese painting. Nonetheless, their radical attitudes to art seem not to have been welcome in Shanghai in the 1910s, when the Chinese painting world was still filled with conservative taste, and the commercial world preferred the exotic novelty of Western painting.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, when the politically radical artists of the Lingnan School came to Shanghai to develop their careers and propagate their new art, they involved themselves in the commercial world by running a bookstore/publishing house and by making calendar posters, in which their realistic and modern tendency

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<sup>168</sup> Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, pp. 37-59.

<sup>169</sup> Gao Jianfu, *Wo de xiandai guohua guan* 我的現代國畫觀, 'My View of Modern National Painting' (Taipei, 1955).

<sup>170</sup> Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, p. 65.

<sup>171</sup> Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, pp. 66-68.

could find greater support and acceptance.<sup>172</sup>

The Gao brothers opened the Aesthetic Bookstore to fulfil their intellectual aspirations on the one hand, and to cater for popular taste in order to support their livelihood on the other. According to reminiscences of their contemporaries, the Aesthetic Bookstore was one of the best-known stores offering Western painting oils and pigments in Shanghai. It also sold a wide range of painted cards, postcards and painting equipment.<sup>173</sup> Huang Jingwan recalled that Xu Beihong's pastime in Shanghai was to visit the Commercial Press bookstore to read art books and Chinese versions of Western literature. As well as this, Xu Beihong also went to the Aesthetic Bookstore which stood opposite to the Commercial Press, and which stocked a variety of commercial art goods, such as colour lithographic catalogues, copies of masterpieces and calendar posters.<sup>174</sup> More importantly, the bookstore functioned as a small gallery where there were frequently displayed works by artists of the Lingnan School. Thus, the bookstore became one of the favourite gathering places for contemporary artists in Shanghai.<sup>175</sup>

The careers of artists of the Lingnan School in Shanghai reveal how the spread of Western art or new Chinese painting was inevitably entangled with the commercially-driven cultural market, and how photographic realism served to bridge these different realms. Although pictorial realism was popular in this period, comprehensive knowledge of Western art had not yet been introduced into China. Most of the Westernised artists were self-taught or had learnt about Western painting through copying printed images. Art courses in early

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<sup>172</sup> On the Lingnan School artists' life in Shanghai, see Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, pp. 64-84.

<sup>173</sup> Chen, 'Yanghua yundong guocheng lueji', p. 120.

<sup>174</sup> Huang, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yiduan jingli', p. 30.

<sup>175</sup> Chen, 'Yanghua yundong guocheng lueji', p. 120.

twentieth-century China concentrated only on copying and on the practical aspects of Western painting, such as those which were taught at the Shanghai Oil Painting Institute and the Shanghai Art Academy. The Gao brothers were among the earliest Chinese students to pursue art studies overseas. They brought back with them a new perception of the role of painting in national modernisation. To promote their new form of Chinese painting with its emphasis on Western realistic practices, the Gao brothers had to involve themselves first in the cultural market in Shanghai, where Western realism and artistic novelties were greatly popular. They opened a bookstore/publishing house to print and sell commercial paintings. Gao Jianfu also cooperated with the renowned calendar poster artist Zheng Mantuo in executing a beauty painting in the style of calendar posters (Fig. 68).<sup>176</sup> The Lingnan School's radical attitude towards art and politics appeared not to find as broad acceptance as their involvement in cultural creativity among the Shanghai literary and artistic circles, as is demonstrated in the accounts of their contemporaries such as Chen Baoyi and Huang Jingwan. At the same time, with their success in gaining a place in Shanghai's cultural scene, the Lingnan School artists exhibited their new-style paintings at the Aesthetic Bookstore, and by this means they were able to develop a new readership with a new perception of Chinese painting.

Xu Beihong's experiences in Shanghai reveal the significant phenomenon, showing how Shanghai had gradually developed a context for the formation of an art field with its urban cultural market, flourishing printing industry, publishers and art educational institutes.<sup>177</sup> The development of this art field was entangled with the spread of Western painting, in which photographic realism played a significant role. Photographic realism played a part in many aspects of

<sup>176</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>177</sup> Hockx, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China*, pp.1-20.

Shanghai's culture and life. Consequently, its popularity also reflected the booming of the publishing industry, photographic businesses, entertainment and advertising, which underlay the rise of a commercially-aware and modernised metropolis. More importantly, photographic realism not only changed painters' pictorial practices and audience's visual habits, but also elevated the value of realism in Chinese art discourse, which had long preferred the expressive and abstract quality of literati painting. The launch announcement of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* stated that the verisimilitude effects in Western painting made it more suitable than Chinese painting to serve the news media. It was argued that Chinese art valued craftsmanship (*gong* 工), while Western painting valued resemblance (*xiao* 肖), and resemblance could reach veracity (*zhen* 真, literally 'veracity, reality or truth').<sup>178</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, Western painting was often regarded as better than Chinese in terms of mimesis. Additionally, photographic realism also played a part in the pictorial and social practices of literati circles. He Guisheng (何桂笙, 1841-1894), the renowned editorial writer of *Shenbao*, repeatedly used photographs to report the elegant gatherings (*yaji* 雅集) of artists and men of letters in the press. He once suggested that painters should execute corresponding paintings according to these photographs. Moreover, embellished with literary inscriptions and bound in albums, this kind of painting would also be emblematic of the literati's graceful accomplishments.<sup>179</sup> His suggestion can find a demonstration in the illustration *Xuyuan caiju tu* (徐園採菊圖, 'Chrysanthemum-Picking in the Xu Garden'), executed by the illustrator Jin Guisheng (金桂生) of the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*

<sup>178</sup> Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, 'Wanqingren yanzhong de xixue dongjian – Yi *Dianshizhai huabao* wei zhongxin' 晚清人眼中的西學東漸 – 以《點石齋畫報》為中心, 'The Late Qing People's Perception of the Transmission of Western Learning in China – *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* as the Case Study, electronic paper from <http://www.chinese-thought.org/whyj/004731.htm>.

<sup>179</sup> Wu, 'Wanqing sishinian Shanghai shijue wenhua de jige mianxiang', p. 82.

in 1890 (Fig. 69). According to its inscription, this illustration was based on a photograph taken at an elegant gathering in which He Guisheng was also present. This illustration demonstrates that the pictorial practice of converting a photograph into a painting, which was widely popular in the making of calendar posters, was also employed in traditional art circles.<sup>180</sup> Whether through the photographically-published forms of the literati activities or in the painted reproductions of the photographically-recorded literati gatherings, the self-expressive and secluded characteristic of traditional literati painting was unavoidably entangled with realism.

Xu Beihong's portrait of the most celebrated Chinese opera actor of the twentieth century, Mei Lanfang (梅蘭芳, 1894-1941), in the painting *Tiannü sanhua* (天女散花, 'Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers'), dated 1918, is an example which reveals the degree of the popularity of photographic realism and Xu Beihong's skill in it (Fig. 70). Moreover, the painting reflects the relationship between photographic realism and cultural life in China. In the painting, Mei Lanfang is portrayed in his stage role as a female celestial in the opera *Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers*, an adaptation of an episode from the *Weimojie* (維摩詰) Buddhist scripture. Mei Lanfang started to perform this role in 1917.<sup>181</sup> Xu Beihong went to the opera in Beijing in 1918 and made the acquaintance of Mei Lanfang through the poet and playwright Luo Yinggong (羅癭公, 1880-1924).<sup>182</sup> Later Xu Beihong made this painting for Mei Lanfang, and Luo Yinggong wrote an inscription on it in which he praised Xu Beihong's skill in realistic portraiture.

<sup>180</sup> On the pictorial method of converting a photographed figure into a painted one, see Wang Shucun 王樹村, 'Yuefenpai nianhua shihua' 月份牌年畫史話, 'An Account of the History of the Calendar Poster Painting', *Meishujia* 美術家, 67 (1989), pp. 74-76.

<sup>181</sup> On Mei Lanfang's creation of this opera, see Mei Shaowu 梅紹武 and Mei Weidong 梅衛東 eds, *Mei Lanfang zishu* 梅蘭芳自述, 'Mei Lanfang in His Own Words' (Beijing, 2005), pp. 117-121.

<sup>182</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 16-17.

The visual verisimilitude in the portrayal of Mei Lanfang is overwhelming, as if the figure was cut out of an actual photograph and affixed to the painting directly. The portrayal of Mei Lanfang in Xu Beihong's painting was apparently copied from the advertising postcards and posters of this opera (Fig. 71). Xu Beihong's method of painting this portrait demonstrates again that Xu Beihong's early art education was closely associated with commercial art. At the same time, the Mei Lanfang portrait reveals that Xu Beihong had mastered a degree of pictorial realism before he pursued art studies in Europe in 1919.

From the late 1910s, it had become popular for tobacco companies to produce series of cigarette cards to attract customers. These cigarette cards often featured fictional characters such as the heroes of the *Outlaws of the Marsh* and the beauties of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. In addition, contemporary opera actors and film stars were also among the most popular subjects.<sup>183</sup> Xu Beihong's realistic portrait of Mei Lanfang is an indication of the high degree of interaction between photographic realism, commerce, entertainment and people's urban life. From the illustration of the fictional and theatre character Shi Qian (Fig. 49), to the portrait of the Chinese opera actor Mei Lanfang, Xu Beihong's works reveal the significance of popular culture in his creative work. Xu Beihong's background made him interested in fictional and theatrical characters, the themes having been popular in the professional art realm, and this penchant continued into his later creation of history painting, such as his creation of *Bawang bieji* (霸王別姬, 'Farewell My Concubine') in oils in 1931 (Fig. 72). This historical story was popular in Chinese opera. Mei Lanfang's performance of the concubine won him his prominent status in Chinese opera world in the

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<sup>183</sup> Sheng Xunchang 盛巽昌, Zhang Xichang 張錫昌 and Feng Yiyong 馮懿有 eds, *Laoxiangyan paizi huacong: Jingju yishu lianpu* 老香菸牌子畫叢：京劇藝術臉譜, 'A Collection of the Old Cigarette Painted Cards: Beijing Opera Masks' (Shanghai, 2000).

1920s.<sup>184</sup>

More importantly, Xu Beihong's portrait of Mei Lanfang revealed the significant phenomenon that photographic realism also participated in relationship building between traditional cultural circles. Xu Beihong made this painting as a gift for Mei Lanfang. It is now preserved in the Mei Lanfang Memorial Museum in Beijing. The man of letters Luo Yinggong's inscription on the one hand increased the cultural value of this portrait; on the other hand, it added more cultural trappings to the image of Xu Beihong as a refined artist. This kind of social practice was seen in traditional art circles, such as Zeng Jing's association with his contemporary literati painters. His realistic portraits of the literati or with the literati's calligraphy inscriptions made him, a professional artist, popular in the literati art world. Luo Yinggong was Kang Youwei's student. Therefore, with Kang Youwei's introduction, Luo Yinggong took care of Xu Beihong and brought him into Beijing's cultural circles. In addition to Mei Lanfang's portrait, Luo Yinggong also invited Xu Beihong to portray another famous opera actor, Cheng Yanqiu (程硯秋, 1904-1958).<sup>185</sup>

Xu Beihong's skill in portrait painting enabled him to participate in cultural scene in Shanghai. At the same time, the visual impulses in Shanghai in turn further polished his technique in pictorial realism. The popularity of Western-derived realistic practices had a far-reaching influence on several aspects of urban life in China. It gradually changed Chinese people's appreciation of realism and helped the birth of a Westernised art field in China. Moreover, entangled as it was with advanced Western civilisation, Western realism, which found broad acceptance among Chinese people through its

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<sup>184</sup> *Jingju shizhao* 京劇史照, 'Pictorial History of Beijing Opera' (Beijing, 1990), pp. 25-26.

<sup>185</sup> Zhang Yihe 章詒和, *Lingren wangshi* 伶人往事, 'Memories of Chinese Opera Actors' (Hunan, 2006).



photographic verisimilitude, added a modern image to professional painters, who had traditionally been the masters of Chinese pictorial realism. They became endowed with a Westernised image and became active and influential in the art and the educational fields. Many of them were politically revolutionary as well, such as Zhou Xiang, Zhang Yuguang and the Gao brothers. Along with Western scientific civilisation and reform-minded intellectuals, photographic realism was symbolic of modernity and therefore increasingly became a valued form of cultural capital in China. As a consequence, Xu Beihong's mastery of it not only led him to gain several job opportunities in Shanghai's cultural market, but also enabled him to associate with intellectual circles; among them, Kang Youwei's influence on Xu Beihong was the most profound. Shanghai intellectual circles valued realism from both the aesthetic and nationalist angles, considering realism to be an essential device to strengthen and modernise China. The following section will look into how Shanghai intellectual circles added nationalist connotations and aesthetic value to realism. Xu Beihong's association with these same Shanghai intellectual circles may explain why he later became an adherent of realism and ambitiously accumulated this new cultural capital to win himself a significant place in the art world. Moreover, the growing perception of the nationalist and modern connotation of realism may have helped Xu Beihong to transcend commercial realism, which was pervasive in his works of the 1910s. He infused nationalism and Western classical painting elements into his later history paintings, which were executed in Chinese ink, and thus made his paintings intellectual. Far from establishing fame only in the commercial art world as the early generation of Westernised painters did, Xu Beihong successfully built his image as an intellectual and Westernised painter, winning himself a position in the fine art field with his use of realism.

## 2.4 A New Form of Cultural Capital – Shanghai Intellectuals’ Perception of Reality (*Zhen*) and Pictorial Realism in the 1910s

The importation of Western printing technology along with the consequent flood of Western images and objects caused the popularity of photographic realism in China. This photographic realism not only manifested itself in the visual art realm, but also referred to the capacity of faithfully rendering social realities. The previous section has indicated that verisimilitude was the key to the employment of Western realistic pictorial practices in the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*. The launch announcement of the *Pictorial* pointed out that the difference between Chinese and Western craftsmanship lay in the pursuit of veracity (*zhen* 真). Without *zhen*, Chinese craftsmanship could not faithfully and visually represent current affairs.<sup>186</sup> Here, *zhen* refers to both visual realism and the truth of news. The *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* featured realism and truth in its launch announcement and advertisement. It claimed to have hired master painters to depict news in realistic details. The news worthy of visual representation included important current affairs and events new to the public. For example, the advertisement for the third issue of the *Pictorial* announced that the issue would represent the news about the treaty-signing following the conclusion of the Sino-French War in 1884 by illustrating the ‘real images’ (*zhenxiang*) of the significant figures who took part in this event.<sup>187</sup> In the English-Chinese dictionary published by the Commercial Press in 1903, *zhenxiang* meant portrait or portraiture, which implied visual and pictorial meanings at that time.<sup>188</sup> Nowadays, *zhenxiang* refers to the actual state of affairs, the truth or the real facts.<sup>189</sup> Through the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*’s

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<sup>186</sup> Chen, ‘Wanqingren yanzhong de xixue dongjian’.

<sup>187</sup> Chen, ‘Wanqingren yanzhong de xixue dongjian’.

<sup>188</sup> *Shangwu shuguan Hua Ying zidian*, pp. 193 & 214.

<sup>189</sup> *Pocket Oxford Chinese Dictionary* (Oxford and New York, 2003).

interpretation, pictorial realism and truth became synonymous under the terms *zhen* and *zhenxiang*. So *zhenxiang*, the original Chinese equivalent of portraiture, broadened its meanings through the ambiguous space brought by the character, *zhen*, which referred to both visual veracity and social realities. Accordingly, *xiezhen*, the indigenous realism of portraiture, was expanded to include both pictorial and discursive practices of realism.

The realistic illustration of domestic and international news and customs made *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* an epitome of modern Chinese history. As studied in the previous sections, its illustrators as well as its significance in the spread of Western painting in China have attracted art historians' attention. Moreover, its illustrations, which were rendered in realistic details, made the *Pictorial* an important source for studying the various circumstances in which China, and in particular Shanghai, encountered in the process of modernisation.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, the wide popularity of *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* in its day perhaps helped to change Chinese people's perception of realism, in the way that it went beyond mere craftsmanship and became a useful tool for bringing truth and new knowledge to the public. As has already been stated in the realm of traditional painting, *zhen* referred to the pursuit of likeness in Chinese portraiture and was associated with pictorial realism, which was rated low on the art hierarchy. Nevertheless, the value of *zhen* in the news media endowed Chinese pictorial realism with a new function of enlightenment, predicting the rapid elevation of the significance of realism in the later national-scale New Culture Movement which commenced around 1916.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> For example, Ye, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*.

<sup>191</sup> Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford, 1967). The May Fourth Movement and The New Culture Movement have often been considered as the same movement. On the nuances of these two movements, see Chen Pingyuan, *Chumo lishi yu jinru Wusi* 觸摸歷史與進入五四, 'Touching History and Entering the May Fourth' (Beijing, 2005).

The *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* served as Xu Beihong's first painting teacher. He learnt realistic painting skills from the pictorial. Nonetheless, the enlightened attitude of the *Pictorial* may also have generated an impact on Xu Beihong, which manifested itself in his contribution of his illustration *Shi Qian Stealing Chickens* to the *Shishi xinbao* in 1912. The *Shishi xinbao* was an important newspaper in the promotion of new thought in China. It actively served as the medium for promoting democracy by frequently publishing the thinking of reform-minded intellectuals. Moreover, it was among the first Shanghai-based newspapers to support the pro-Western New Culture Movement by issuing a new supplement entitled *Xuedeng* (學燈, 'Light of Learning') in 1918 to publish literary works written in the vernacular, the language signifying the new era of democracy.<sup>192</sup> Both the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* and *Shishi xinbao* participated in the golden age of Chinese journalism, when the publishing of journals in China was burgeoning and taking on the more serious task of enlightenment, as was manifested in ways such as expressing unbiased information, creating public discursive space and introducing global knowledge.<sup>193</sup> Xu Beihong's art learning was associated with the news media, in which painting was considered modern and intellectual, an integral part of a modern civilisation as in the West. These two reforming publications reveal that Xu Beihong may have perceived these new characteristics of painting when he was learning Western painting techniques from the news pictorials.

Xu Beihong's contact with the news media showed that before he worked for the Gao brothers in 1916, he perhaps had known them through their pictorial, *Zhenxiang huabao* (真相畫報), with the English subtitle, *The True Record*,

<sup>192</sup> Hu Huaichen, 'Shanghai xueyi gaiyao (san)' 上海學藝概要 (三), 'An Outline of the Artistic Activities in Shanghai (III)', *Shanghai Tongzhiguan qikan*, 1.4 (1934), pp. 1093-1128 (pp. 1094-1095).

<sup>193</sup> Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* (London, 1937), p. 114.

which was published from May 1912 to March 1913. Xu Beihong said that he sent his horse painting to the Gao brothers and made their acquaintance by doing so. Huang Jingwan's account of Xu Beihong's life in Shanghai claims that the Gao brothers asked Xu Beihong to make a calendar poster first before they hired him. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong was reluctant and instead handed in the bird-and-flower hanging scrolls.<sup>194</sup> Some of the details in these accounts seem to be contradictory each other and do not identify the accurate date when Xu Beihong and the Gao brothers first met.<sup>195</sup> Even so, the horse and the bird-and-flower paintings that Xu Beihong submitted to the Gao brothers suggest that Xu Beihong may have recognised the artistic accomplishments of the Gao brothers in their animal, landscape and bird-and-flower paintings through *The True Record*, which regularly published the works of the Lingnan School in the early 1910s.

To enter the Shanghai art world, in which commercial tastes were pervasive, the Gao brothers established the Aesthetic Bookstore and published their own pictorial to promote their reformed style national painting and their new thoughts on art. *The True Record* claimed to be an advertising medium, while it contained a large amount of political news about the new Republican China as well as photographs of significant political figures and their activities, such as the first issue which published the picture of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's mourning for the martyrs who had died in the cause of democratic revolt.<sup>196</sup> In its launch statement, *The True Record* explained that its purpose was to scrutinise Republican politics, examine social situations and introduce worldwide knowledge. In this way, the

<sup>194</sup> Huang, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yiduan jingli', p.30.

<sup>195</sup> *Xu Beihong nianpu* listed a detailed chronology of the works Xu Beihong submitted to the Gao brothers. Xu Beihong first handed in four season bird-and-flower hanging scrolls in November 1915 and the horse painting in January 1916; Gao Qifeng later asked Xu Beihong to paint four beauty paintings. Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>196</sup> Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China*, p. 69. *The True Record*, 1 (1912).

publication itself was a 'true record' of Republican China.<sup>197</sup> In addition to politically-oriented reports, it also published serialised articles on painting, such as Chen Shuren's *Xinhuaafa: Huihua duxishu* (新畫法：繪畫獨習書, 'New Painting Methods: A Guide to Independent Study'), in which Chen introduced Western art history and painting schools.<sup>198</sup> When talking about the debates around realism and idealism in the nineteenth-century Western art world, Chen Shuren highly praised ideal beauty, which was created with great realistic technique in the landscape paintings of the Barbizon School, in particular those of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875).<sup>199</sup> Chen Shuren cited the successful combination of poetic beauty and pictorial realism in the Barbizon School to criticise traditional Chinese painters' dismissal of pictorial realism. Chen Shuren argued that the capacity for realistic rendering was the essential foundation of both realism and idealism. Pictorial realism was an integral element of a good painting. Nonetheless, a good painting should go beyond mere objective resemblance to express the artist's moral integrity and sincerity. Chen Shuren took the making of an ideal female nude as an example. To reach an ideal nude, the idealistic painter first would be diligent in life drawing, and then select the best parts of different models to create an ideal beauty; while the realistic painter would draw from a life model in painstaking realistic detail and then carefully arrange the composition and colour to invoke viewers' emotions.<sup>200</sup> In Chen Shuren's opinion, the ability to create lifelike renderings of real scenes and objects was the essential key to reaching both realism and idealism. At the same time, whether in the style of realism or idealism, a successful art work had to

<sup>197</sup> 'Zhenxiang huabao chushi zhi yuanqi' 真相畫報出世之緣起 'Statement about the Launching of *The True Record*', *The True Record*, 1 (1912).

<sup>198</sup> For a brief account of Chen Shuren's article and the role of *The True Record* in the promotion of a new national painting, see Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>199</sup> Chen Shuren, 'Xinhuaafa: Huihua duxishu', *The True Record*, 5 (1912), pp. 12-14.

<sup>200</sup> Chen, 'Xinhuaafa', *The True Record*, 6 (1912), pp. 13-17 (pp. 15-16).

strike a chord with the audience. Accordingly, a good painting had to reach both pictorial realism and aesthetic beauty.

As an illustrated magazine, *The True Record* featured image publishing. It announced that it would publish seven kinds of painting, including fine art, history, satire, current affairs and three kinds of *xiezhen* painting: current affairs, geography and historical sites. Current affairs *xiezhen* painting recorded important national events with photography; geography *xiezhen* painting rendered places of military significance in great detail; historical site *xiezhen* painting aimed to preserve the national heritage by faithfully illustrating the *zhenxiang* of these historical places.<sup>201</sup> *The True Record* broadened the usages of *xiezhen* in both its subject matter and its function. *Xiezhen*, the originally Chinese term synonymous with portraiture, was expanded to include such categories as landscapes and current affairs. Moreover, its functions were broadened from reproducing realistic renderings of the portrayed to bearing social and historical responsibilities. Moreover, *xiezhen* was perceived as being closely associated with photography by *The True Record*, as the difference between current affairs painting and current affairs *xiezhen* painting lay in the use of photography.<sup>202</sup> It is obvious that photography had exerted an influence on the Chinese perception of *xiezhen* rhetorically and visually.

*The True Record* broadened the definition of *xiezhen* beyond its original visual sphere by making a rhetorical connection between *xiezhen* and *zhenxiang*. *Zhen* was the character shared by the two terms and in turn created some ambiguous space in which they could inter-react. *The True Record* rendered its Chinese title *Zhenxiang* into 'true record'. In the English-Chinese dictionary of 1903, 'true' was translated as *zhenshi* (真實) or *chengshi* (誠實); 'truth' as

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<sup>201</sup> *The True Record*, 1 (1912).

<sup>202</sup> *The True Record*, 1 (1912).

*zhenshi* (真實) or *zhenli* (真理).<sup>203</sup> Accordingly, *zhenxiang* had an emphasis on the faithful report or record of news rather than pictorial realism for *The True Record*. Actually, the definitions of *zhenxiang* were varied in *The True Record*. Besides meaning the true record implied by the pictorial's title, *zhenxiang* in the launch announcement was used to refer to pictorial verisimilitude and socio-political realities. The launch announcement drew on the story of the English political leader Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) to stress the importance of a good likeness in portraiture. The announcement translated Cromwell's saying 'paint me as I am' into *huiwu zhenxiang* (繪吾真相), emphasising that a good likeness should take pains to include even the imperfect parts of the portrayed. This story of Cromwell was cited to project the goal of *The True Record*, which was to report with total honesty the realities of the government.<sup>204</sup>

*The True Record* featured current affairs reports and realistic illustrations and was issued at intervals of ten days. Its format was apparently modelled on the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial*. By comparison, the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* perceived *zhenxiang* largely in its original pictorial realm and expanded its connotations from the socio-political perspective; while *The True Record* further transformed *zhenxiang* to denote political, social and historical realities. From the *Dianshi Studio Pictorial* to *The True Record*, this developing style revealed the trajectory of Chinese perception and appreciation of this indigenous realism. *Xiezhen* remained as pictorial realism while *zhenxiang* gradually extended to reflect social realities. In the diversification of the meanings of the Chinese portraiture terms, *zhenxiang* and *xiezhen*, painting became increasingly involved in social reform and culture building; and pictorial realism was the key to the

<sup>203</sup> *Shangwu shuguan Hua Ying zidian*, pp. 310-311.

<sup>204</sup> Ying Bo 英伯, 'Fakanci' 發刊辭, 'The Launch Announcement', *The True Record*, 1 (1912), pp. 4-6.



embodiment of painting's new functions.

The value and importance of indigenous realism was further elevated by Kang Youwei, who studied Chinese realism on a world scale. Kang Youwei was a prestigious reform-minded Qing officer, who was trusted by the Qing emperor Guangxu (光緒, 1874-1907) to institute radical reforms in 1898, known as the 'Hundred Days' Reform'. This reform movement aimed to strengthen and modernise China, and therefore it called for changes in several aspects of Qing life and government, including the examination system, education, the armed forces, commerce and industry.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, the national reform movement only survived for less than one hundred days, between June and September 1898, and was then suppressed by the conservative Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧, 1835-1908). Kang Youwei was forced to escape from Beijing and lived in exile overseas after the imperial Qing was overthrown in 1912. From 1904, Kang Youwei travelled to Europe to study Western governmental systems along with history and culture. He first planned to publish his travels in eleven European countries – Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Holland and Britain, although he only actually finished writing about his travels in Italy and France and published them respectively in 1905 and 1907.<sup>206</sup> During his travels in Italy, Kang Youwei paid numerous visits to museums and galleries. He gave high praise to the convincing verisimilitude in Raphael's paintings. He also conducted a comparative analysis of the development of Chinese and Western art and asserted that the West's realistic

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<sup>205</sup> Charlotte Furth, 'Intellectual Change: From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920', in Merle Goldman and Leo Qu-fan Lee eds, *An Intellectual History of Modern China* (Massachusetts, 2002), pp. 13-96. An detailed account of the 1898 Reform Movement by Kang Youwei himself, see Liang Qichao, *Kang Youwei zhuan* 康有為傳, 'A Biography of Kang Youwei' (Beijing, 2004), pp. 132-170.

<sup>206</sup> Zhong, 'Xunzhao zhenli de Kang Youwei'.

style originated in Chinese Song painting (960-1279).<sup>207</sup> This assertion of the superiority of Song painting was continuously elucidated in the catalogue of Kang Youwei's considerable collection of Chinese paintings, which was published in 1917.<sup>208</sup> Kang Youwei's views on art were mostly delineated in the above-mentioned publications and they made a profound impact on Xu Beihong when he became acquainted with Kang Youwei in Shanghai in 1916.

Xu Beihong submitted his portrait of Cangjie (倉頡), said to be the inventor of the Chinese writing system, for the new Cangsheng mingzhi University (倉聖明智大學, often abbreviated as Cangsheng University), which was established in 1916, and which solicited a portrait of Cangjie as the concrete presentation of its title. According to Huang Jingwan's record, Xu Beihong depicted Cangjie as a man with a long beard and four eyes, whose shoulder was covered with leaves (Fig. 73).<sup>209</sup> An illustration of Cangjie was attached at the top of the announcement of a charity party held by the Cangsheng University in the *Shenbao* in 1917. It appeared to be a printed copy of Xu Beihong's original work, which perhaps became the emblem of the University (Fig. 74). Xu Beihong's portrait of Cangjie was approved of by director of the University, Ji Juemi (姬覺彌) and, as a consequence, the artist was invited to live in the Hardoon garden, the location of Cangsheng University, as an artist-in-residence to create more portraits of Cangjie and to teach painting at the University, where he got acquainted with Kang Youwei.<sup>210</sup>

Cangsheng University was sponsored by the Jewish merchant Hatong (哈同, Silas Aaron Hardoon, 1849-1931). Hardoon was an opium dealer and enjoyed

<sup>207</sup> Kang Youwei, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong' 歐洲十一國游記兩種, 'Travelogue of Two of the Eleven Visited European Countries', in Zhong, *Zouxiang shijie congshu - Kang Youwei: Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong*; *Liang Qichao: Xindalu youji ji qita; Qindanshili: Guimao lüxingji, guiqianji*, pp. 49-348.

<sup>208</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu'.

<sup>209</sup> Huang, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yiduan jingli', p. 32.

<sup>210</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 11-13.

high social status in Shanghai by constructing the luxurious Asian-style Hardoon garden, where he established Cangsheng University, the Learned Society of Guangcang (*Guangcang xuehui* 廣倉學會), and published *Yishu congbian* (藝術叢編, 'Art Miscellany') and *Xueshu congbian* (學術叢編, 'Learned Miscellany'), with the aim of promoting traditional Chinese learning.<sup>211</sup> This ambitious cultural project attracted several famous intellectuals and collectors whose great learning in traditional Chinese culture was acknowledged and who felt strongly nostalgic for the collapsed imperial Qing, such as Luo Zhenyu (羅振玉, 1866-1940), Wang Guowei (王國維, 1877-1929) and Kang Youwei, etc. These men were enthusiastic about the study and collection of antiques. The Hardoon garden collected hundreds of ancient tortoise shells.<sup>212</sup> It also actively purchased antiques and became a distribution centre for ancient books in Shanghai.<sup>213</sup> In addition to Kang Youwei, Xu Beihong must have become acquainted with other learned intellectuals during his residence there and must have had access to the considerable collection of antiques in the garden. As Huang Jingwan recalled, Xu Beihong was busy viewing and copying all kinds of artworks after he moved to the Hardoon garden. His painting and calligraphy thus made impressive progress.<sup>214</sup> Kang Youwei's promotion of the powerful stele calligraphy, along with the other intellectuals' interest in epigraphy, made Xu Beihong intrigued with the idea of creating his own calligraphic style based on the mode of stele inscriptions.<sup>215</sup> Besides the intellectuals who gathered there and the various

<sup>211</sup> Shen Ji 沈寂, *Shanghai daban: Hatong waizhuan* 上海大班：哈同外傳, 'The Shanghai Chairman: An Anecdotal Biography of Hardoon' (Shanghai, 2002), pp. 431-439. On the architecture of the Hardoon garden, see Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*, pp. 151-153.

<sup>212</sup> Li Enji 李恩績, *Ailiyuan mengyinglu* 愛儷園夢影錄, 'An Account of the Phantom Aili Garden' (Beijing, 1984), p. 278.

<sup>213</sup> Li, *Ailiyuan mengyinglu*, p. 98.

<sup>214</sup> Huang, 'Huiyi Xu Beihong zai Shanghai de yidian jingli', p.33.

<sup>215</sup> On Kang Youwei's view on traditional Chinese calligraphy in terms of nationalism, see Fu Heyuan 傅合遠, 'Kang Youwei *Guangyizhou shuangji* de meixue sixiang' 康有為《廣藝舟雙輯》的美學思想, 'Kang Youwei's Aesthetic Thoughts in *Guangyizhou shuangji*', *Wenshizhe* 文史哲,

activities in the field of antique studies, artists such as Gao Jianfu and the well-known traditional painter Huang Binhong (黃賓虹, 1864-1955) also joined Kang Youwei and Deng Shi (鄧實 1876-1951), the founder of the *Guocui xuebao* (國粹學報, 'National Essence Journal', 1905-1911), to organise the Society for Art Appreciation (*Yishu guanshanghui* 藝術觀賞會). They gathered monthly in the Hardoon garden to view masterpieces of Chinese art.<sup>216</sup> Xu Beihong may not have become close to those famous artists and intellectuals (except for Kang Youwei) at that time. However, by means of his friendship with Kang Youwei, Xu Beihong developed a relatively comprehensive knowledge of the history of Chinese painting. Xu Beihong's skill in realistic portraiture brought him precious opportunities to view the considerable antique collection in the Hardoon garden and Kang Youwei's Chinese painting collection, involving himself in traditionally highbrow cultural activities. His experience in the Hardoon garden and his association with the intellectuals of great learning in traditional Chinese culture paved the way for Xu Beihong's later adherence to realism and for his projection of an ambitious cultural identity as a modern and reformed Chinese ink painter.

Xu Beihong attracted Kang Youwei's attention by virtue of his skill in portrait painting. In addition to the aforementioned portrait of Kang Youwei and his family in celebration of Kang's sixtieth birthday, Xu Beihong also made a portrait of Kang's deceased wife based on photographs of her. Kang Youwei once publicly praised Xu Beihong as a painter of genius and claimed his skill in life-drawing was miraculous.<sup>217</sup> Xu Beihong recalled how Kang Youwei held a formal ceremony to announce him as a pupil. They often exchanged views on

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1 (1997), pp. 93-97.

<sup>216</sup> Jian, 'Gemíng huájia Gao Jianfú', p.88.

<sup>217</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 14.

Chinese painting, and Kang Youwei's valuing of Song painting and dismissal of the Qing Four Wangs were among the most penetrating opinions on the development of Chinese painting, as far as Xu Beihong was concerned.<sup>218</sup>

Kang Youwei argued that the simplified and rough style of literati painting, which was epitomised in the works of the Qing Four Wangs – Wang Shimin (王時敏, 1592-1680), Wang Jian (王鑑, 1598-1677), Wang Yuanqi (王原祁, 1642-1715), and Wang Hui (王翬, 1632-1717), was the key to the regression of Chinese painting in modern times.<sup>219</sup> In the opening of the 1917 catalogue of his Chinese painting collection, Kang Youwei started by formulating his version of the development of Chinese painting with an assertion that “Of late Chinese painting has been at its worst because its painting theory was erroneous”.<sup>220</sup> Kang Youwei attributed the erroneous theory to the aesthetics of literati painting, whose painters turned their backs on nature in pursuit of calligraphic and expressive brushwork in their paintings. They dominated the Chinese art world from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) onwards. The aesthetics of literati painting, which manifested itself in the abstract tendencies in the paintings, reached its apogee in the Four Wangs and could be traced back to the Tang poet Wang Wei (王維, ca 701-761), who infused Zen Buddhism into his creations.<sup>221</sup> Although the Yuan dynasty witnessed the emergence of literati painting, Kang Youwei approved of it because it created a new painting style when the realistic style reached its perfection in Song painting. In Kang Youwei's opinions, the preference of the Yuan painters for the mood of a painting rather than form

<sup>218</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', pp. 9-10.

<sup>219</sup> On Kang Youwei's view of Chinese and Western painting, see Lawrence Wu, 'Kang Youwei and the Westernization of Modern Chinese Art', *Orientalism*, 21.3 (1990), pp. 46-53. Jiang Yinghe 江瑩河, 'He Zhongxi wei dajia – Kang Youwei de guohua biangeguan' 合中西爲大家 – 康有爲的國畫變革觀, 'Integrating Chinese and Western Painting to Create a Great New Chinese Painting – Kang Youwei's View on Chinese Painting Reform', *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報, 5 (2001), pp. 106-111.

<sup>220</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 93.

<sup>221</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 93.

likeness was originally creative. The error was made by their successors in their blind adherence to the conventions of literati painting without reform.<sup>222</sup> Kang Youwei indicated that the aesthetics and practices of literati painting were legitimised as the orthodoxy of Chinese painting in the hands of Wen Zhengming (文徵明, 1470-1559) and Dong Qichang (董其昌, 1555-1636). While they dismissed the professional painters' substantial renderings and valued the amateur literati's symbolic brushwork, their Western counterpart, Raphael, was replacing the golden and stiff style of religious painting by life-drawing and oil painting. These two synchronic phenomena reversed the standing of Chinese and Western painting. Kang Youwei concluded, "The Western painting sought verisimilitude (*zhen*) while ours dismissed it; evolving against the trend, Chinese painting thus end up in regression".<sup>223</sup> The Qing Four Wangs represented the culmination of the trajectory of Chinese literati painting development from the Yuan dynasty to modern times. Their later generations learnt painting only by imitating the previous works with simplified brushwork. In Kang Youwei's eyes, Chinese painting was at its worst in the Qing dynasty. He warned that if Chinese painters continued to be conservative, following the conventions and denying substantial renderings, Chinese painting would become extinct. To rescue Chinese painting, Kang Youwei proposed the integration of Chinese and Western painting to create a new era of Chinese painting.<sup>224</sup>

Kang Youwei's opinions on present-day Chinese painting, such as his view that Chinese painting was at its worst as a result of traditionalism (*shoujiu* 守舊), anti-verisimilitude and a dismissal of professional painters, were inherited by Xu Beihong in his article, 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting', first

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<sup>222</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', pp. 105-106.

<sup>223</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', pp. 133-134.

<sup>224</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 120.

published in the *University Daily* (*Beijing daxue rikan* 北京大學日刊) on 23 May 1918.<sup>225</sup> This article was originally a lecture which Xu Beihong delivered to the Beijing University Painting Research Society, where Xu taught painting between 1918 and 1919. Xu Beihong began the article with his criticism of present-day Chinese painting, saying that “The decline of Chinese painting has reached its nadir”. And ‘traditionalism’ (*shoujiu*) in the Chinese art world was responsible for the decline. To reform Chinese painting, Xu Beihong advocated “keeping what is good in traditional Chinese painting, continuing what is abandoned [in present-day Chinese painting], rectifying what is bad, reforming what is imperfect, and adopting what is appropriate for China in Western painting”.<sup>226</sup> Xu Beihong’s opinions on the modern Chinese painting situation, its problems and remedies, shared a great similarity with Kang Youwei’s. Even the terms Xu Beihong used in the article were directly borrowed from those in Kang Youwei’s writings.

To rectify Chinese painting, which had gone astray as a result of its traditionalism and its dismissal of professional painters’ status and craftsmanship, Kang Youwei prescribed Song painting, which modelled painted images on real scenes and objects in order to seek pictorial verisimilitude. Kang Youwei referred to the realistic Song paintings as oils, such as those by Yi Yuanji (易元吉), Zhao Yongnian (趙永年) and Su Hanchen (蘇漢臣) (Figs 75-76). Their works were carried out with fine brushwork, delicate colour and painstaking care. Kang Youwei claimed that the world’s first oil painting tradition originated with Chinese Song painting. Marco Polo (1254-1324) took Song painting back to Italy and thus ushered in the highly-developed verisimilitude in Raphael’s oil

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<sup>225</sup> Xu Beihong’s ‘Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting’ was first published in the *University Daily*. Later it was re-published in the first issue of *Huixue zazhi* (繪學雜誌, ‘Painting Miscellany’), the University’s art journal.

<sup>226</sup> Xu, ‘Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa’, p. 39. Fong, *Between Two Cultures*, p. 90.

paintings.<sup>227</sup> In his travels in Italy, Kang Youwei came to the conclusion that Chinese painting was on the highest rung of the world art ladder before the fifteenth century and that Song painting was the world's best. The watershed moment of the reversal of the standing of Chinese and Western painting occurred in the fifteenth century when Raphael invented the life-drawing technique and developed the Chinese-derived technique of oil painting.<sup>228</sup>

Kang Youwei strived to see as many of Raphael's works as he could when he travelled in Italy. He claimed that Raphael invented European oil painting, which was imported from China. Moreover, Raphael was the first in the West to model painted images on real scenes and objects so that he created superb verisimilitude in his paintings.<sup>229</sup> Kang Youwei's admiration for Raphael was so great that he created eight poems to pay homage to Raphael's artistic accomplishments.<sup>230</sup> In these poems, Kang Youwei stressed again the supreme verisimilitude achieved by Raphael in his works. Verisimilitude (*zhen*) was the key to Raphael's great achievements and to the superiority of Western painting over Chinese in modern times. Kang Youwei argued that before Raphael, Western art world had been filled with solemn and stiff religious painting in the style of China's Buddha and bodhisattvas images, whereas Chinese Song painting had witnessed the efflorescence of realistic painting in various subjects, such as landscape and bird-and-flower scenes. In addition to Western painting, Kang Youwei also compared Song painting to Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Indian painting. He thus asserted that Chinese painting was the world's best before literati painting was legitimised as orthodox in China in the fifteenth

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<sup>227</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 94.

<sup>228</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', pp. 133-134.

<sup>229</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', pp. 97 & 133.

<sup>230</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', p. 137.



century.<sup>231</sup> To restore the supreme status of Chinese painting in the world, Kang Youwei laid new stress on form-likeness in painting. Moreover, he argued that literati painting should be replaced by the ruled-line painting (*jiehua* 界畫) and the academy style as the orthodoxy of Chinese painting.<sup>232</sup>

Kang Youwei's high esteem for Song painting was also inherited by Xu Beihong in his article, 'Comments on the Painting and Calligraphy Collection in the Wenhua Palace', published in the *University Daily* on 20 and 21 May 1918.<sup>233</sup> This article was originally a talk which Xu Beihong had addressed to the members of the Beijing University Painting Research Society, when they paid a visit to the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities (*Guwu chenliesuo* 古物陳列所), located inside the Forbidden City.<sup>234</sup> Its exhibition spaces comprised several halls such as the Wenhua and Wuying (武英) palaces, in which significant imperial affairs used to take place. The Institute was the first art museum in China. It opened to the public in 1914 and exhibited part of the imperial collection from the previous Qing dynasty.<sup>235</sup> Xu Beihong's comments on the exhibited works provide a glimpse into his perception of traditional Chinese painting, which convey the extent of Kang Youwei's influence on him.

At the beginning of the article, Xu Beihong elucidates the function, importance and status of art and Chinese painting. He argues:

Each nation, despite its origin from tribes, has established museums in metropolitan areas and large cities to facilitate its development of civilisation. It is especially valuable to have national treasures on display to arouse the feelings of admiration in later generations and to investigate the traces of evolution. It is

<sup>231</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', pp. 133-134.

<sup>232</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', pp. 93-94.

<sup>233</sup> For a republished version, see Xu, 'Ping Wenhudian suocang shuhua'.

<sup>234</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10 May 1918.

<sup>235</sup> Duan Yong 段勇, 'Guwu chenliesuo de xingshuai jiqi lishi diwei shuping' 古物陳列所的興衰及其歷史地位述評, 'Development of the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities and its Social Status', *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, 5 (2004), pp. 12-37.

only we the Chinese who do not have [museums]. What a pity! To our nation as the representative of Oriental art, [this demonstrates] our decline. Also, the cultural relics and ritual vessels left by our forebears are the treasured objects that are the evidence of our history and the embodiment of our national spirit ... We are distinctive as an ancient country, a country with an ancient civilisation, and by the fifteenth century, our painting was the world's best.

各國雖起自部落，亦設博物美術等院於通都大邑，俾文明有所展發。國寶羅列，尤其珍重，所以啓後人景仰之思，考進化之跡。獨我中華則無之，可慨嘆也，而於東方美術代表之國家，其衰也，並先民之文物禮器歷史之所據，民族精神之所寄之寶物。... 特吾古國也，古文明國也，十五世紀前世界圖畫第一國也。<sup>236</sup>

Xu Beihong inherited Kang Youwei's high praise for Chinese painting before the fifteenth century. Later in the article, Xu Beihong comments on specific exhibited works, and many he considered the finest were the works either of Song dynasty or of the realistic style, such as the paintings of the Song painters, Lin Zhuang (林椿), Zhao Dajian (趙大年), Zhao Ziang (趙子昂); the realistic bird paintings of Huang Quan (黃荃) and Xu Xi (徐熙) of the Five Dynasties (907-979), the period before the Song; and those of the Qing court painters, such as Xu Yang (徐揚) and Lang Shining. Xu Beihong was impressed by the fine brushwork and realistic renderings in the bird-and-flower paintings of the above-mentioned painters, demonstrating their keen observational skill as well. When remarking on Lin Zhuang's bird-and-flower painting, Xu Beihong felt admiration for the painstakingly careful renderings of the Song painters and their mastery in striking a balance between realistic depiction and poetic beauty (Fig. 77). As regards Lang Shining's *White Hawk and Glossy Ganoderma*, Xu Beihong approved of the refined and realistic renderings as well as the

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<sup>236</sup> Xu, 'Ping Wenhua dian suocang shuhua', p. 31. This English translation is quoted from Cheng-hua Wang, 'Rediscovering Song Painting for the Nation: Artistic Discursive Practice in Early Twentieth-Century China', pp. 1-34 (p. 1) (forthcoming).

integration of Western painting practices and Chinese materials in his paintings (Fig. 64). Nonetheless, Xu Beihong felt regret that Lang Shining did not introduce Raphael's accomplishments to China. Xu Beihong's views on Song painting and Lang Shining demonstrated the profound influence of Kang Youwei. The way of elucidating Chinese painting development which is seen through commenting on specific works in Kang Youwei's 1917 catalogue appears to have been followed by Xu Beihong in his lecture on the Wenhua palace collection. By comparison, Xu Beihong's opinions were more neutral as a professional artist. He did not refer to the realistic Song painting as oil painting. When commenting on a work, Xu Beihong would give a detailed account of its composition, colour, brushwork and style. Take the example of Lang Shining: Kang Youwei drew on Japan's high respect for him to advocate that Chinese painting should learn from the West, while Xu Beihong pointed out Lang Shining's mastery of realistic rendering as well as his lack of poetic depiction.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, Xu Beihong approved of the craftsmanship of ruled-line painting, which Kang Youwei advocated legitimising as orthodox, but he also criticised the fact that its spatial conception was not precise, as a result of its two-dimensional depiction.<sup>238</sup> Kang Youwei apparently appreciated art from a political point of view, using art as the vehicle to propagate his aspirations to universalise Confucianism. The Song dynasty witnessed the efflorescence of Confucianism. As a consequence, Kang Youwei's assertion of Song painting as the origin of the world's oil painting and as a global supreme form of art appeared to support his advocacy of the universalised value of the Chinese intellectual tradition of Confucianism.<sup>239</sup>

Xu Beihong's comments on the exhibition of the imperial collection

<sup>237</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 120. Xu, 'Ping Wenhuanian suocang shuhua', p. 35.

<sup>238</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 43.

<sup>239</sup> Wang, 'Rediscovering Song Painting for the Nation', p. 7.

demonstrated Kang Youwei's influence on him regarding the rediscovery of the value of Song painting, and of Chinese indigenous realism as well as museum building and heritage preservation. After his travels in Italy, Kang Youwei also indicated that China was inferior to Italy because China did not preserve its antiquities, the embodiment of a nation's culture. Kang Youwei therefore appealed to China to preserve its past by setting up a related institute for collecting antiquities.<sup>240</sup> Kang Youwei and Xu Beihong's re-evaluation of Chinese painting on a world scale reflected the shift of China's geographical perception of its own culture. From about 1895, as a result of a series of challenges posed by the West and Japan, the Chinese became increasingly aware that their cultural position was no longer central and superior. *Zhongguo*, literally the Middle Kingdom, alluding to the supreme position of China, had undergone a fundamental reorientation.<sup>241</sup> China appeared to be merely a member of the world – and even seemed to be a particularly weak member in modern times. The formation of a new global awareness in China not only reflected China's domestic crises and international weakness, but also involved the substantial importation of Western learning, often through Japan. Many neologisms were created in this flood of Western culture, such as *wenming* (文明, 'civilization') and *guozu jingshen* (國族精神, 'national spirit'), with Liang Qichao as the key figure in promulgating these ideas in China.<sup>242</sup> *Wenming*, often synonymous with *wenhua* (文化, 'culture'), was not a completely new

<sup>240</sup> Kang, 'Ouzhou shiyiguo youji liangzhong', p. 118.

<sup>241</sup> Xiaobing Tang, 'Introduction: Toward a Geography of the Discourse of Modernity' in Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (California, 1996), pp. 1-10.

<sup>242</sup> Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲, 'Huading "guozu jingshen" de jiangjie: Guanyu Liang Qichao Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi de sikao' 畫定「國族精神」的疆界：關於梁啟超《論中國學術思想變遷之大勢》的思考, 'Defining the Boundary of "National Spirit": Thinking of Liang Qichao's *On the Course of the Development of Chinese Intellectual Thought*', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊, 53 (2006), pp. 1-38.

term to the Chinese. Nonetheless, the expansion of its meaning at the turn of the twentieth century involved nineteenth-century Europe's new measurement of a nation's civilisation, in which concerns were shifted from political and economic development to cultural endeavours and artistic traits.<sup>243</sup> Accordingly, art became the embodiment of a nation's civilisation and a sign of national spirit and identity.

Kang Youwei's high respect for Song painting as the world's best thus not only reflected his personal aspirations to restore China's glory, but also projected the collective mentality of modern Chinese intellectuals, who were obsessed with finding a pictorial paradigm to rescue China after art was perceived as the new sign of a nation's civilisation. The substantial renderings in Song painting were considered by these Chinese intellectuals to take on the concrete form of materiality and substantiality seen in the advanced Western civilisation. Kang Youwei argued that the materiality of Western painting cannot compare with that of Chinese painting.<sup>244</sup> Consequently, the realistic style of Song painting made it comparable with Renaissance art, which represented the highest achievement in the evolution of world's civilisation.<sup>245</sup> Cai Yuanpei, seminal in establishing art education in modern China, also concurred with the notion that Song painting was the culmination of the trajectory of the evolution of Chinese painting, claiming that its painting elements were assimilated both by Renaissance landscape painters and by the art of the French Rococo.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, Cai

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<sup>243</sup> Fang Weigui 方維規, 'Lun jinxindai Zhongguo "wenming", "wenhua" guan de shanbian' 論近現代中國「文明」、「文化」觀的嬗變, 'On the Shift of the Perception of "Civilization" and "Culture" in Modern China', *Shilin* 史林, 4 (1999), pp. 69-83.

<sup>244</sup> Kang, 'Wanmu caotang canghuamu', p. 96

<sup>245</sup> Wang, 'Rediscovering Song Painting for the Nation', p. 10.

<sup>246</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci' 在北京大學畫法研究會上的演說詞, 'Speech at the Beijing University Painting Research Society', in Gao Pingshu *et al.* eds, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu* 蔡元培文集：美育, 'A Collection of Cai Yuanpei's Writings: Aesthetic Education' (Taipei. 1995), pp. 85-87 (p. 85).

Yuanpei also published an article to introduce Raphael to Chinese readership. He mentioned the three masters of the Italian Renaissance and in particular focused on Raphael.<sup>247</sup> It appears that the intellectuals of the day shared similar views on the evolution of Chinese and Western painting and felt great admiration for Raphael. The evaluation of art from a material perspective made a great impact on Xu Beihong, which was manifest in his assertion of the superiority of Western art over Chinese art in its material respect.<sup>248</sup>

Realistic renderings were perceived as the key to the superiority of Western art, representing the advanced material civilisation of the West as a result of its developed science and technology. Accordingly, Chinese indigenous realism, *xiezhen*, was formulated, in particular through Kang Youwei, to serve as the concrete form of China's high civilisation and thus became pivotal in the cultural/intellectual element of new nation building, which achieved its zenith in the New Culture Movement. Chen Duxiu, a significant figure of the Movement, determined in his 1919 article 'Art Revolution' that Chinese art urgently required a revolution, and that it must adopt the realistic spirit of Western painting (*yanghua xieshi de jingshen* 洋畫寫實的精神).<sup>249</sup> In this article, Chen Duxiu elucidated a similar opinion to that of Kang Youwei on the present-day situation of Chinese painting. He accused the Four Wangs of representing the culmination of literati painting, the wicked Chinese painting (*ehua* 惡畫). In terms of Song painting, Chen Duxiu concurred with Kang Youwei's view that the realistic renderings in Song painting were akin to Western realism. From Kang Youwei to Chen Duxiu, *xiezhen*, as the originally devalued pictorial practices and as a category of Chinese painting, was connected to Western realism, the neologism

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<sup>247</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Laifeier' 賴斐爾, 'Raphael', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, pp. 40-56.

<sup>248</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 40.

<sup>249</sup> Chen, 'Meishu geming', p. 86.

emblematic of advanced Western and modern civilisation. Painting became the concrete form of a rhetorical national power. In the eyes of intellectuals, the Four Wangs stood for the global weakness of present-day China. By contrast, realism became a cure which could bring about China's rejuvenation. Realism therefore did not just refer to a pictorial technique. More importantly, it implied a world view and a belief.<sup>250</sup>

Pictorial realism was increasingly understood to be a valuable form of cultural capital in both the art world and the nationalist discourse. Xu Beihong, who first gained his artistic training in Chinese portraiture and realistic techniques, gradually recognised the importance of this indigenous realism in modern China, and reaped the benefits of it during his stay in Shanghai. By having acquired mastery of realistic skills, Xu Beihong gained himself many job opportunities in the commercial art world of Shanghai, where the early phase of Western painting occurred. More importantly, he was able to associate with the intellectual gentry, who had a profound influence on his lifelong devotion to realism. Through Kang Youwei's introduction, Xu Beihong had access to artistic circles of Beijing, where he made the acquaintance of the actor Mei Lanfang by means of painting his portrait. Moreover, his skill in pictorial realism caused his artistic accomplishments to be compared with those of Lang Shining, as demonstrated in his *Three Horses* painting, a painting which Xu Beihong executed for Ji Juemi, the manager of the luxurious Hardoon garden, where Xu Beihong made the acquaintance of Kang Youwei and developed his art philosophy (Fig. 62). Xu Beihong's skill in realism not only caused him to be associated with the traditional scholarly and artistic circles of Shanghai and Beijing, but also enabled him to enter the pro-Western intellectual circle of

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<sup>250</sup> Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', p. 39.

Beijing. In 1918 Xu Beihong was invited by the well-known Francophile educator Li Shizeng (李石曾, 1881-1973) to teach painting at the Kongde School (孔德學校), named after the French thinker Auguste Comte (1798-1857).<sup>251</sup> The Kongde School was established by Li Shizeng and Cai Yuanpei in 1917 and then became a part of the Sino-French University, set up under the Sino-French work-study scheme.<sup>252</sup> Li Shizeng and Cai Yuanpei were the originators of the Sino-French scheme, encouraging Chinese students to study in France. This worker-student movement culminated between 1919 and 1921. Well-known Chinese artists such as Lin Fengmian and Pan Yuliang (潘玉良, 1895-1977) pursued art studies in France under this scheme. In 1918, Xu Beihong was also invited by Cai Yuanpei to teach at the Beijing University Painting Research Society. When Xu Beihong taught there, he gave several lectures and attended many artistic activities, including paying a visit to the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities, the predecessor of the Beijing Palace Museum. Cai Yuanpei, the first Minister of Education of the Republic of China (1912) and then President of Beijing University (1916-1927), was seminal in promulgating the neologism *meishu* and aesthetic education in China, fostering the formation of a Westernised art field.<sup>253</sup> Beijing University was the base of the New Culture Movement, which triggered a national-scale transplant of Western knowledge systems to replace the traditional Confucian system. In this movement, Western realism was accorded the highest ever status in the Chinese art world. Xu Beihong's skill in pictorial realism enabled him to practise the

<sup>251</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 15. For a brief account of Kongde School, see Gao, *Cai Yuanpei nianpu changbian* 蔡元培年譜長編, 'A Comprehensive Chronology of Cai Yuanpei' (Beijing, 1996), Vol. II.1, pp. 67-68.

<sup>252</sup> Paul Bailey, 'The Sino-French Connection: The Chinese Worker-Student Movement in France, 1902-1928', in David S. G. Goodman ed., *China and the West: Ideas and Activities* (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 72-102.

<sup>253</sup> William J. Duiker, *Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, Educator of Modern China* (Pennsylvania and London, 1977).



highbrow cultural activities of traditional literati painters and to participate in the modern channels and institutes of art discourse, such as public exhibitions, art publications and associations. More importantly, by means of the close association between *xiezhen* and Western realism, it paved the way for Xu Beihong to fulfil his aspirations and to establish his prestigious reputation in the new Westernised art field.

## Chapter 3 The Formation of the Art Field

### 3.1 The Transformation from *Yi* (Art) to *Mei* (Beauty): The Formation of *Meishu* (Fine Art) as a Field in China and Cai Yuanpei's Contributions

Xu Beihong left Shanghai for Beijing in December 1917, and was invited by Cai Yuanpei to be a tutor in the Beijing University Painting Research Society in March 1918, teaching figure painting and Western watercolour. Xu Beihong taught there for about one year, until he left for Paris in March 1919.<sup>254</sup> While he was teaching at Beijing University, he published three articles, including 'Beauty and Art in Painting' in addition to the aforementioned 'Comments on the Painting and Calligraphy Collection in the Wenhua Palace' and 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting'.<sup>255</sup> 'Beauty and Art in Painting', which appeared in the *University Daily* on 23 April 1918, was a published version of part of a talk which Xu Beihong delivered to the Society. At the beginning of the article, Xu Beihong defined the two Chinese characters *mei* (美, 'beauty') and *yi* (藝, 'art') respectively. He elucidated that

My definition of *yi* is to display every detail of any object with our best effort, whereas *mei* refers to an [artificial] natural world, created by coordinating and fine-tuning our most sensitive perceptions, and conveyed through *yi*. *Yi* can exist without *mei*, e.g. the vivid portraits and documentation of customs; however, *mei* is impossible without *yi*. *Yi* serves as nothing more than a model that people can refer to, while *mei* is able to create something admirable and enjoyable.

吾所謂藝者，乃盡人力使造物無所遁形；吾所謂美者，乃以最敏之感覺支配、增減，創造一自然境界；憑藝傳出之。藝可不藉美而立（如寫風俗，寫像之逼真者），美必不可離藝而存。藝僅足供人參考，而美方足以令人耽玩也。<sup>256</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 14-23.

<sup>255</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Hua zhi mei yu yi' 畫之美與藝, 'Beauty and Art in Painting', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>256</sup> Xu, 'Hua zhi mei yu yi', p. 29.

Xu Beihong took the example of making a painting of a beauty to explain the difference between *mei* and *yi*. A portrait of a beauty of humble origins which was executed with *yi* would faithfully depict the poor surroundings of the beauty, such as some shabby huts located in a desolate place, with wild weeds growing everywhere. On the other hand, a portrait executed with *mei* would turn the dilapidated condition into a poetic one by 'replacing her basket with an elegant one, placing a full view of wild flowers and some of them beside her, bordering the river with lushness, decorating pebbles with moss, turning the bushes into grandly posed trees whose shadow covers the worn-out fence, mirroring the sky with the glittering water; and depicting a carefree glint radiating in her eyes as if she was free from any worries'. Xu Beihong argued that a portrait painted according to *yi* techniques would be only a portrait (*xiezhen*), while a painting which had undergone *mei* modification would turn out to be a work of art, conveying the full development of craftsmanship and beauty (*jinyi jinmei* 盡藝盡美). Xu Beihong related *yi* to practical technique, while he assigned to *mei* the function of evoking human feelings. In Xu Beihong's opinion, works of art should strike a chord with their viewers, and so their composition could be invented without necessarily completely duplicating the real scenes. Even so, a painting of *mei* could only be achieved by realistic craftsmanship. Although the elements of a painting could be re-arranged to add a more artistic tone to the painting to make it more enjoyable, they should be modelled on real scenes or objects to make the painting realistic and visually convincing. Xu Beihong argued that

If an artist fails to master chiaroscuro, to faithfully portray the shape of an object, or to harmonise the tones, these [shortcomings] are all indicative of undeveloped skills of *yi*, let alone *mei*.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Xu, 'Hua zhi mei yu yi', p. 30.

若夫光暗之未合，形象之乖準，筆不足以資分佈，色未足以致調和，則藝尙未成，奚遑論美！

Xu Beihong's opinion on the function of art as evoking viewers' feelings concurred with that of Cai Yuanpei. In the article, *Duiyu xinjiaoyu zhi yijian* (對於新教育之意見, 'Suggestions for a New Education'), Cai Yuanpei approved of the artist's ability of poetic modification.<sup>258</sup> He argued that a painter could turn terrific or magnificent scenes, such as storms, shipwrecks and volcanoes, into admirable works of art, just as a poet can transform the everyday routine of eating and cooking into something particularly enjoyable in his poems. Xu Beihong's interpretation of *mei* and *yi* is also reminiscent of Chen Shuren's elucidation of idealism and realism in the article, 'New Painting Methods: A Guide to Independent Study'. A painting characterised by realism was faithfully modelled on the portrayed objects, while one showing idealism added some poetic modification to the realistically-rendered work. But no matter whether realism or idealism was the aim, neither of them could be achieved without realistic skills.<sup>259</sup> Although Xu Beihong had emphasised the importance of pictorial realism as much as the masters of the Lingnan School had, it was not until he returned to China from Paris in 1926 that he used the term 'realism' (*xieshi zhuyi*) overtly in his talks and writings. In the article, *Faguo yishu jinkuang* (法國藝術近況, 'The Current Situation in French Art'), which was originally an interview with a *Shibao* reporter and was published in the *Shibao* (時報) on 5 March 1926, Xu Beihong, like Chen Shuren, divided Western painting roughly into two categories, realism (*xieshi*) and idealism (*xieyi*). Like Chen Shuren, Xu Beihong also emphasised the importance of realistic skills as

<sup>258</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Duiyu xinjiaoyu zhi yijian', in Gao Pingshu *et al.* eds, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Jiaoyu (Shang)* 蔡元培文集：教育（上），'A Collection of Cai Yuanpei's Writings: Education (I)' (Taipei, 1995), pp. 78-88.

<sup>259</sup> Chen, 'Xinhuaafa', *The True Record*, 6 (1912), pp. 15-16.

the essential instrument for executing both kinds of painting.<sup>260</sup> In a speech which Xu Beihong delivered to the public in a radio broadcast and which was then published in the *Shibao* on 19 March 1926, Xu Beihong first clearly cited the term *xieshi zhuyi* as the solution to the current regressive situation in Chinese painting.<sup>261</sup> Xu Beihong's use here of *mei* and *yi* instead of idealism and realism demonstrated that his artistic thoughts during his time at Beijing University apparently corresponded with those of the University president Cai Yuanpei.

Cai Yuanpei was eminent in the educational and cultural world in China in the early half of the twentieth century. The most significant positions he took throughout his life were those of the Republic's first Education Minister in 1912 and president of Beijing University from 1916 to 1927. Although he was only in charge of the Education Ministry for a few months due to his disappointment with Provisional President Yuan Shikai (袁世凱, 1859-1916) which caused him to resign his ministerial post, the programme of educational reform which Cai Yuanpei introduced was to exert a profound influence on Chinese education.<sup>262</sup> Some strategies of this educational reform were sufficiently progressive to demonstrate a break with the previous dynasty, such as eliminating the study of Confucian classics from the elementary school curriculum; abolishing the eight-legged essay (*bagu wen* 八股文) as the basis for literary style; developing a system of schools to provide education for girls; allowing girls and boys to attend the same elementary and middle schools; and promoting aesthetic

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<sup>260</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Faguo yishu jinkuang', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 71-74 (p. 72).

<sup>261</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Mei de jiepu - Zai Shanghai Kailuo gongsi jiangyanci' 美的解剖 - 在上海開洛公司講演辭, 'The Anatomy of Beauty - A Speech Given to the Shanghai Kailuo Company', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>262</sup> Cai Yuanpei resigned in July 1912. He made several statements to express his determination to resign his directorship and implied his disappointment with the political situation in Beijing. On the statements, see 'Da ke wen' 答客問, 'Answers to the Questions Posed by the Public', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Jiaoyu (Shang)*, pp. 207-211; 'Ci Jiaoyu zongzhang cheng' 辭教育總長呈, 'Petition for Resignation from the Education Minister', p. 197.

education.<sup>263</sup> Among these reforms, the establishment of aesthetic education influenced China's art world the most profoundly.<sup>264</sup>

Although educational reform had been triggered in the late Qing dynasty to forestall further humiliation and defeat after a series of wars and following various national crises posed by the West and by Japan, Confucian classics still remained at the heart of educational system, in order to protect traditional Chinese values from erosion due to Western encroachment. This conservative attitude towards educational reform was manifested in the slogan '*Zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*' (中學爲體，西學爲用) – maintaining the essence of Chinese Confucianism and only adopting Western scientific and technical civilisation.<sup>265</sup> This slogan was also stated as the principle of the Beijing Capital University (*Jingshi daxuetang* 京師大學堂), the highest educational institution of the late Qing dynasty.<sup>266</sup> By comparison, the abolition of the study of the classics at elementary school level under the Republic marked a monumental shift in the attitude of the Chinese people towards their own culture and towards China's position in the world. In the eyes of the Chinese people, China was relatively weak in the world. So this abandonment of classical studies indicated that the scale of the transplanting of Western knowledge under Cai Yuanpei's leadership was huge enough to reach the very core level of Chinese culture.

The elimination of Confucianism as the core of education concurred with

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<sup>263</sup> Marianne Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth-Century China*, trans., Paul J. Bailey (Michigan, 1988), pp. 84-87.

<sup>264</sup> Wan Qingli, 'Cai Yuanpei xiansheng yu jindai Zhongguo meishu jiaoyu' 蔡元培先生與近代中國美術教育, 'Mr Cai Yuanpei and Aesthetic Education in Modern China', in Wan, *Wan Qingli meishu wenji* 萬青力美術文集, 'A Collection of Wan Qingli's Essays on Art' (Beijing, 2004), pp. 179-185.

<sup>265</sup> Li Guojun 李國鈞 and Wang Bingzhao 王炳照 eds, *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi: Diliujuan Qingdai xia (1840-1911)* 中國教育制度通史：第六卷 清代下 (1840-1911), 'A General History of Chinese Educational System: Vol. VI, the Later Period of Qing Dynasty' (Shandong, 2000), p. 245.

<sup>266</sup> Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞 and Chen Zuen 陳祖恩 eds, *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyushi ziliao huibian: Wuxu shiqi jiaoyu* 中國近代教育史資料匯編：戊戌時期教育, 'Compilation of Historical Resources on Modern Chinese Education: Wuxu Period' (Shanghai, 1993), pp. 116-146.

the new aims of Republican education set out by Cai Yuanpei in the article, 'Suggestions for a New Education'.<sup>267</sup> Cai Yuanpei proposed national military education (*junguomin jiaoyu* 軍國民教育), utilitarian education (*shili zhuyi jiaoyu* 實利主義教育), ethical education (*gongmin daode jiaoyu* 公民道德教育), world-outlook education (*shijieguan jiaoyu* 世界觀教育) and aesthetic education (*meiguan jiaoyu* 美感教育) as the new five aims to replace the traditional ones of loyalty to the emperor (*zhongjun* 忠君); respect for Confucius (*zunKong* 尊孔); and training in public morality, the military spirit, and utilitarianism (*shanggong, shangwu, shangshi* 尚公、尚武、尚實).<sup>268</sup> National military education, utilitarian education and ethical education continued the previous educational aims of training in public morality, the military spirit, and utilitarianism. In terms of ethical education, Cai Yuanpei suggested replacing the five traditional Confucian relationships (*junchen youyi, fuzi youqin, fufu youbie, zhangyou youxu, pengyou youxin* 君臣有義、父子有親、夫婦有別、長幼有序、朋友有信; enjoining loyalty and obedience by minister to king, son to father, wife to husband, younger to older brother, and friend to friend') with the French revolutionary concept of liberty, equality and fraternity as the new ethical basis of Chinese society.<sup>269</sup> The aims of loyalty to the emperor and respect for Confucius were abandoned in the new programme of educational reform and were replaced with world-outlook education and aesthetic education. Cai Yuanpei's new five aims imposed a global dimension on education in China, which was manifested in his proposal *Jiaoyu duli yi* (教育獨立議, 'Proposal for Education Independence'), suggesting that

<sup>267</sup> Cai, 'Duiyu xin jiaoyu zhi yijian', pp. 78-88.

<sup>268</sup> Li and Wang, *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi: Diliujuan Qingdai xia (1840-1911)*, pp. 268-291. Tsuruta Takeyoshi 鶴田武良, 'Shin matsu/ Minkoku shoki no bijutsu kyoiku - Kin hyakunen rai Chugoku kaiga shi kenkyu (IV)' 清末民国初期の美術教育 - 近百年來中國繪畫史研究 四, 'Art Education in the Late Qing Dynasty and Early Republican Period - A Study of Chinese Painting History of the Last Century (IV)', *The Bujutsu Kenkyu* 美術研究, 365 (1996), pp. 18-33.

<sup>269</sup> Duiker, *Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei*, pp. 44-46.

the new educational system should assimilate the strong points of the Euro-American countries, such as those of France, Germany and America.<sup>270</sup>

Cai Yuanpei's educational ideals demonstrated that the Confucian outlook should give way to a Western world-view. This turn to the West was bound up with Cai Yuanpei's overseas studies in Germany between 1907 and 1911. It also marked the abandonment of Japan as the model for China's Western learning and educational reform.<sup>271</sup>

Replacing Confucian studies with aesthetic education was perhaps the most monumental feat achieved by Cai Yuanpei in terms of his innovative contributions to China's education. It demonstrated the profound influence of the humanistic aspect of Western civilisation upon him during his time at the University of Leipzig, where he attained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1910. The article 'On the Replacement of Religion with Aesthetic Education', which was originally a lecture which Cai Yuanpei delivered at the *Shenzhou xuehui* (神州學會, 'The Learned Society of China') and was published in the August 1917 issue of *New Youth*, became a beacon of Chinese reform in education and one of the most frequently-cited art treatises of modern China.<sup>272</sup> Cai Yuanpei employed an evolutionary perspective on the development of human history to explain why he promoted aesthetic education to replace religion. He argued that religion dominated human knowledge, will and feelings in the early days. After the gradual development of science, religion lost control over human intelligence in modern times but still remained influential in evoking human emotions. The function of religious art in moulding human disposition in the early days was

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<sup>270</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Jiaoyu duli yi' in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Jiaoyu (Xia)*, pp. 208-211.

<sup>271</sup> Japan had served as the primary model for the late Qing educational reform. For related studies, see Douglas R. Reynolds, *China 1898-1912 – The Xinzheng Revolution and Japan* (Massachusetts and London, 1993).

<sup>272</sup> This article is also collected in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Jiaoyu (xia)*, pp. 378-384.



similar to that of religion. After the style and subject matter of art became increasingly diversified in modern times, Cai Yuanpei believed that art was more suitable than religion to offer human consolation. More importantly, art could evoke people's sense of beauty. He argued that because beauty had a universal nature, it could provide a feeling of emotional detachment and thus could avoid religious wars, which had been caused by the strong emotional conflicts between people of different beliefs. In China, traditional Confucian education used music to mould human personality. The establishment of aesthetic education was therefore a logical substitute after Confucianism was removed from the core of new education.

For Cai Yuanpei, art was more developed and in line with modern needs because it had undergone a scientifically evolutionary process. Cai Yuanpei stated his evolutionary view of art in *Meishu de jinhua* (美術的進化, 'The Evolution of Art').<sup>273</sup> Art itself was a manifestation of science and therefore it was more effective than Confucianism at making China a modern nation. The evolutionary hypothesis of Darwinism had a monumental impact on modern Chinese intellectuals' perception of reality. Chinese intelligentsia acknowledged that the Confucian moral idealism – *Dao* (道, 'Ways of Kings'), was outdated and impossible to achieve in a world dominated by Darwin's socially-generated rule of the 'survival of the fittest'. Power was the rule of the universe. Accordingly, to be strong was the only way for China to survive in the modern world.<sup>274</sup> Art, which had undergone evolution, thus served as the instrument for China's reform.

Cai Yuanpei proposed that aesthetic education should replace religion in large part on account of the political context. There was talk of and action

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<sup>273</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Meishu de jinhua', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, pp. 131-136.

<sup>274</sup> Duiker, *Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei*, pp. 17-19.

towards restoring the dynastic system around 1917. Kang Youwei was a leading proponent of this and he promoted Confucianism as a state religion.<sup>275</sup> Besides, Liang Qichao suggested Buddhism as the primary instrument for social transformation and stability at the time when traditional institutions were on the brink of collapse.<sup>276</sup> The conservatism of the reform-minded generation, who were raised on Confucianism and remained loyal to it through the Republican era, provoked the discontent of the radical intellectuals. They triggered the New Culture Movement in an effort to eliminate the dead hand of imperial reign and Confucian tradition. They objected to making Confucianism a religion, and also attacked virtually every aspect of the traditional order, which revolved around Confucianism.<sup>277</sup> Aesthetic education replaced Confucianism as the new cultural value in China. Cai Yuanpei advocated replacing the previous educational aim of respect for Confucius with aesthetic education. Chen Duxiu, appointed dean of the College of Literature of Beijing University by Cai Yuanpei in 1917, assigned art as the means to rejuvenate Chinese society and culture.<sup>278</sup> Besides the radicals, the conservatives, who were endeavouring to protect the national heritage, also regarded art as the symbol of national spirit. Deng Shi and Huang Binhong, the leaders of the national essence movement which started up in the first decade of the twentieth century, compiled an anthology of art treatises,

<sup>275</sup> Han Xing 韓星, 'Kang Youwei Kongjiaoshuo shuping' 康有為孔教說述評, 'Comments on Kang Youwei's Promotion of Confucianism as a State Religion', electronic article from <http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/rujiao/kywkjssp.htm>.

<sup>276</sup> Wang Junzhong 王俊中, 'Jiuguo, zongjiao yi zhixue – Liang Qichao zaoqi de foxueguan jiqi zhuanzhe' 救國，宗教抑哲學？– 梁啟超早期的佛學觀以及轉折, 'Patriotism, Religion or Philosophy – Liang Qichao's Early Perspective on Buddhism and the Transition of His Thoughts', *Shixue jikan* 史學集刊, 31 (1999), pp. 93-116.

<sup>277</sup> Han Xing, 'Wusi Xinwenhua yundong changdao zhe de kongjiao feijiaoshuo' 五四新文化運動倡導者的孔教非教說, 'Opinions on "Confucianism Was not Religion" of the Leading Figures of the May Fourth New Culture Movement', electronic article from <http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/rujiao/54xwhydcdzdkjfs.htm>.

<sup>278</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Wo zai Beijing daxue de jingli' 我在北京大學的經歷, 'My Life at Beijing University', in Gao Pingshu et al. eds, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Zizhuan* 蔡元培文集：自傳, 'A Collection of Cai Yuanpei's Writings: Autobiography' (Taipei, 1995), pp. 197-208.

*Meishu congshu* (美術叢書, 'A Compilation of Fine Art'), in 1911.<sup>279</sup> Deng Shi stated in the preface to this anthology that the motivation for the compilation was because Chinese art was internationally acclaimed and because it represented the superiority of the essence of Chinese culture in the world.<sup>280</sup> Art was accorded the pivotal role in the process of cultural building after Confucianism was gradually faced with destruction during the Republican period.

Cai Yuanpei was among the progressive New Culture Movement intellectuals who took an offensive stance towards Confucianism and traditional institutions, but his humanistic orientation enabled him to strike a balance between political radicalism and philosophical idealism in his perception of aesthetic education and art. In addition to endowing aesthetic education with revolutionary attributes, Cai Yuanpei particularly emphasised its transcendent nature. Cai Yuanpei's perception of beauty and reality was influenced by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who had divided reality into two parts, the phenomenon and the noumenon, that is, the material world and the spiritual world.<sup>281</sup> Science played the paramount role in the material world, whereas the spiritual world was dominated by a transcendental force, which Cai Yuanpei compared with the Confucian 'Ways' (*Dao* 道) or the Chinese Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji* 太極).<sup>282</sup> Cai Yuanpei argued that national military education, utilitarian education and ethical education only improved the material conditions of the Chinese people, while aesthetic education brought them spiritual contentment and helped to reach a disinterested world of harmony and goodness,

<sup>279</sup> Laurence A. Schneider, 'National Essence and the New Intelligentsia', in Charlotte Furth ed., *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China* (Massachusetts, 1976), pp. 57-89 (p. 58).

<sup>280</sup> Shao Hong 邵宏, 'Xixue "meishushi" dongjian yibainian' 西學"美術史"東漸一百年, 'One Hundred Years of the Importation of the Western Learning of Art History', *Wenji yanjiu* 文藝研究, 4 (2004), pp. 106-114 (p. 109).

<sup>281</sup> Duiker, *Tu'ai Yitan-p'ei*, pp. 15-41. Cai Yuanpei, 'Kangde meixue shu' 康德美學述 'Kantian Aesthetics', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, pp. 60-68.

<sup>282</sup> Cai, 'Duiyu xinjiaoyu zhi yijian', pp. 79-82.

the noumenon world described by Kant. Therefore, Cai Yuanpei thought, aesthetic judgement was based on subjective and instinctive feelings instead of rational intelligence.<sup>283</sup> The more of a sense of beauty a piece of work evoked, the less functional and utilitarian it would be. After clarifying the attributes and functions of each kind of education, Cai Yuanpei categorised music, fine art (*meishu*), and painting (*tuhua*) as the objects of aesthetic education.<sup>284</sup>

Art had attracted the attention of politicians who took charge of the educational reform in the last decades of the Manchu monarchy. Zhang Zhidong (張之洞, 1837-1909), the eminent statesman of the late Qing educational reform, recognised the urgent need for the incorporation of Western learning into Chinese schools.<sup>285</sup> Therefore, in the 1902 and 1903 imperial edicts to establish a comprehensive system of new schools, under the directorship of Zhang Zhidong and Zhang Baixi (張百熙, 1847-1907), art was added to all levels of curriculum, from primary schools and middle schools to university preparatory schools and colleges, under the course titled *tuhua*.<sup>286</sup> The curricula of university preparatory school was made up of two disciplines, politics (*zheng* 政) and *yi*; and *tuhua* was included in the *yi* discipline, along with ethics, Chinese and Western history, foreign languages, arithmetic, physics, chemistry, botany and zoology, geology and mineralogy, and gymnastics. Students who majored in the subjects of the *yi* discipline were able to enrol in the four faculties of

<sup>283</sup> Cai, 'Kangde meixue shu', pp. 61-63.

<sup>284</sup> Cai, 'Duiyu xinjiaoyu zhi yijian', pp. 83-85.

<sup>285</sup> On Zhang Zhidong and Qing educational reform, see William Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China* (Massachusetts, 1971).

<sup>286</sup> Mayching Kao, 'Reforms in Education and the Beginning of the Western-Style Painting Movement in China', in Andrews and Shen, *A Century in Crisis*, pp. 146-161 (p. 148). There were two versions of the 'Regulations for the Establishment of Schools' (*xuetang zhangcheng* 學堂章程), one was *Qinding* (欽定) and the other was *Zouding* (奏定). The earlier one was formulated in 1902 and the latter was in 1903. *Qinding* version was not put into practice, and later the *Zouding* version was formulated to modify it. On the school systems of these two versions, see Li and Wang, *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi: Diliujuan Qingdai xia (1840-1911)*, pp. 292-346.

agriculture, science (*gezhi* 格致), engineering and medicine at university.<sup>287</sup>

Accordingly, art was perceived as the essential training for the study of science-related subjects. Hence, the official bulletin of the dynastic Education Ministry (*Xuebu guanbao* 學部官報) conveyed the fact that most teachers who taught the *tuhua shougong* course (圖畫手工, 'painting and handicraft') should also teach such courses as arithmetic, geometry, science and geography in schools.<sup>288</sup> Art seemed to have only the slightest association with the study of humanities.

Zhang Zhidong divided Western learning into three kinds, *xizheng* (西政, 'Western politics'), *xiyi* (西藝, 'Western technology'), and *xishi* (西史, 'Western history'); and he categorised painting (*hui* 繪) as a branch of *xiyi*, along with arithmetic, mineralogy, medicine, acoustics, optics, chemistry and electricity (*suanhuikuangyi, shengguanghuadian* 算繪礦醫·聲光化電).<sup>289</sup> Although Zhang Zhidong advocated importing Western learning to strengthen China, he forbade the teaching of Western philosophy in schools.<sup>290</sup> So the importance of Western art was apparently recognised by the Chinese in its technical aspect rather than the aesthetic one at that time. This emphasis on only the technical feature of Western art was manifested in the courses provided in the university preparatory schools, where the *tuhua* subject included such courses as perspective, chiaroscuro, cartography, descriptive geometry, mechanical drawing and other similar subjects.<sup>291</sup> Those courses demonstrated that Western art was valued for the superiority of its drawing technique, which fitted China's goal of

<sup>287</sup> Li and Wang, *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi: Diliujuan Qingdai xia (1840-1911)*, p.301.

<sup>288</sup> Tsuruta, 'Shin matsu/ Minkoku shoki no bijutsu kyoiku – Kin hyakunen rai Chugoku kaiga shi kenkyu (IV)'.

<sup>289</sup> Cai Zhensheng 蔡振生, *Zhang Zhidong jiaoyu sixiang yanjiu* 張之洞教育思想研究, 'A Study on Zhang Zhidong's Educational Thoughts' (Liaoning, 1994), p. 138.

<sup>290</sup> Cai, *Zhang Zhidong jiaoyu sixiang yanjiu*, p. 182.

<sup>291</sup> Wu Fangcheng, 'Tuhua yu shougong – Zhongguo jindai yishu jiaoyu de dansheng' 圖畫與手工 – 中國近代藝術教育的誕生, 'Painting and Handicraft – The Birth of Art Education in Modern China', in Yen, *Shanghai meishu fengyun*, pp. 1-45 (p. 24).

modernisation modelled on advanced Western science and technology. Art's significance in the educational reform of the late Qing period was also demonstrated by its inclusion in the subjects of the new national examination, which replaced the traditional civil service examination in 1905. Jiang Danshu (姜丹書, 1885-1962), among the earliest students of the Liangjiang High Normal School (*Liangjiang youji shifan xuetang* 兩江優級師範學堂), which was established in 1906 as one of the first normal schools to teach art teachers for the new educational scheme, attended the new examination and later gave an account of his experience in the magazine *Meishu yanjiu* (美術研究, 'Art Research').<sup>292</sup> In this account, Jiang Danshu mentioned the examination topics on the subject of art, which included Chinese painting, Western painting, and descriptive geometry. The topic for Chinese painting asked candidates to depict two peonies with Chinese brush and ink; and that for Western painting required a watercolour painting of a gigantic battleship floating on the sea at night. The topic for Western painting indicated that Western art was imported to serve the development of China's technology. Consequently, Western art had to be emphasised more than Chinese art in the new education programme of the early twentieth century. The sole emphasis on the practical aspect of Western learning in the late Qing reform movements was criticised by Liang Qichao, who argued that *yi* only touched on the shallow level of Western civilisation, such as the practical language and military tactics, and thus could not help to resolve China's

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<sup>292</sup> Jiang Danshu, 'Wushi nianlai yishu jiaoyu zhi yiye' 五十年來藝術教育之一頁, 'A Page of Art Education over Fifty Years', *Meishu yanjiu*, 1 (1959), pp. 30-33. Jiang studied at the Liangjiang High Normal School from 1907 to 1910. On the transformation of the civil service examination scheme in the late Qing period, see Liu Longxin 劉龍心, 'Cong keju dao xuetang – celun yu wanQing de zhishi zhuanxing (1901-1905)' 從科舉到學堂 – 策論與晚清的知識轉型 (1901-1905), 'From Civil Service Examinations to New Schools – Policy Essays and Knowledge Transformation in the Late Qing Period, 1901-1905', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan*, 58 (2007), pp. 105-139.

core problems.<sup>293</sup>

Before Cai Yuanpei promoted aesthetic education in China, it appeared that art to the Chinese had little association with the sphere of fine art. In the 1903 edition of an English/Chinese dictionary, the entry 'art' was translated as *shouyi* (手藝, 'handicraft'), *jiyi* (技藝, 'craftsmanship') and *jishu* (技術, 'skill'); 'artist' as *qiaoshou gongjiang* (巧手工匠, 'skilled craftsman'), and *zhuyi jingshouzhe* (諸藝精熟者, 'one who masters various skills'); 'artisan' as *qiaogong* (巧工, 'skilled craftsman') and *gongjiang* (工匠, 'workman').<sup>294</sup> It is apparent from this that art before the Republican period was perceived by the Chinese as only a form of technique without any aesthetic connotations. Hence, Western art was known to the Chinese as *tuhua*, whose value was only recognized in its pictorial realism. Art, which was called *tuhua* or *yishu* (藝術), the techniques of craftsmanship, revealed that the Chinese did not learn about what was art or fine art in the way that Westerners did.

Art, meaning technique rather than fine art, was derived from the Chinese classical term *liuyi* (六藝, 'six technologies'). In *Zhouli* (周禮, 'Book of Rituals of Zhou'), one of the texts of the classical Confucian canon, *liuyi* referred to ritual (*li* 禮), music (*yue* 樂), archery (*she* 射), horsemanship (*yu* 御), writing (*shu* 書), and arithmetic (*shu* 數).<sup>295</sup> *Yi* was then broadened by Emperor An (安帝, reign 94-125) to mean any subject requiring specific technique, such as medicine (*yi* 醫), special technique (*fang* 方) and divination (*bu, shi* 卜、筮), in addition to the aforementioned six techniques.<sup>296</sup> As a consequence, art, which was called *tuhua* or *yishu* in the Qing dynasty, was only regarded as technique.

With a close association between human spirit and aesthetic appreciation as

<sup>293</sup> Li & Wang, *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi: Diliujuan Qingdai xia (1840-1911)*, p. 236.

<sup>294</sup> *Shangwu shuguan Hua Ying zidian*.

<sup>295</sup> Cai, 'Duiyu xinjiaoyu zhi yijian', pp. 87-88.

<sup>296</sup> Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p. 305.

well as a detachment of utilitarian and functional purposes, Cai Yuanpei's perception of art was very different from that of previous dynasties. Cai Yuanpei called aesthetics *meixue* (美學), aesthetic or art appreciation *meigan* (美感), and art or fine art *meishu*, the techniques of beauty, marking a contrast to *yishu*, the techniques of craftsmanship. All terms associated with art or aesthetics had the character *mei* added to them by Cai Yuanpei. The most distinctive mark of the breakthroughs that Cai Yuanpei made in Chinese perception of art was his promulgation and institution of aesthetics and his acknowledgement of the transcendent nature of art by means of calling art *meishu* instead of *yishu*.<sup>297</sup> By emphasising the aesthetic attribute of art, beauty (*mei*), rather than its technique (*yi*), Cai Yuanpei gave art and China's aesthetic education a very different landscape from the previous one, which was only concerned with the material aspect of Western civilisation.

*Meishu* did not exist in the Chinese vocabulary of visual art until 1910, when the *Meishuguan* (美術館, 'Hall of Fine Art') was founded in the Nanyang Industrial Exposition (*Nanyang quanyehui* 南洋勸業會).<sup>298</sup> In 1912, the Education Ministry under Cai Yuanpei's leadership established the *Meishu diaochachu* (美術調查處, 'Department of Fine Art Investigation') and appointed the leading leftwing intellectual Lu Xun as its director.<sup>299</sup> It was Lu Xun who

<sup>297</sup> To promote aesthetics underlying the humanistic picture of the new Chinese educational system, Cai Yuanpei gave many related lectures, and all of the titles of them contained the Chinese character *mei*, such as 'Meishu de jiazhi' 美術的價值, 'Value of Art'; 'Mei Gan' 美感, 'Art Appreciation'; 'Meishu de qiyuan' 美術的起源, 'Origin of Art', etc. For a complete collection of Cai Yuanpei's talks and writings on art, see Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*.

<sup>298</sup> Fine art was translated as *meishu* by Wang Guowei in 1902. Wang Guowei had perceived the Western concepts of fine art and aesthetics and employed them in his study of the Chinese literary masterpiece, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, as early as 1904. Nevertheless, Wang Guowei was concerned with *meishu* in literary terms rather than in the visual art realm, as Lu Xun and Cai Yuanpei later did. On Wang Guowei's aesthetic ideas, see Shao, 'Xixue "meishushi" dongjian yibainian', pp. 106-108.

<sup>299</sup> Chen Zhenlian 陳振濂, *Jindai Zhongri huihua jiaoliushi bijiao yanjiu* 近代中日繪畫交流史比較研究, 'A Comparative Study of the History of Interchange between Chinese and Japanese Painting in the Modern Era' (Anhui, 2000), p. 62.



gave *meishu* a clear definition in the article *Ni bobu meishu yijianshu* (擬播佈美術意見書, 'A Draft Proposal on the Dissemination of Fine Art'), published in 1913.<sup>300</sup> Lu Xun explained that the term *meishu* had not existed in the Chinese language until it was created to be the Chinese equivalent of the English 'art or fine art'. Lu Xun further clarified that the word for art was derived from the Greek, and had the meaning *yi*. Nonetheless, the works of *yi* were different from the works of *meishu*. He argued that works of fine art represented the process of glorifying (*meihua* 美化) the natural things (*tianwu* 天物) through artistic ideas (*sili* 思理). Accordingly, the leaf-shaped jade, richly-carved tiny ivory pieces or furniture could not be regarded as works of art displaying *meishu*. Lu Xun's view of art approved of the superiority of artistic creation over painstaking craftsmanship in the sphere of fine art. This stance concurred with Cai Yuanpei's views and got a response in Xu Beihong's 'Beauty and Art in Painting'. Xu Beihong categorised those forms of traditional professional painting, such as portraiture (*xiezheng*) and genre painting, which were generally based on realistic rendering and routine practices, into the sphere of *yi*.<sup>301</sup> Xu Beihong was clearly sensitive to the latest artistic thinking of the intelligentsia, and endeavoured to transcend the lower status of a professional painter in the art world.

After clarifying the definition of art, Lu Xun further pointed out that fine art contained subjects such as painting, sculpture, architecture, music and literary writing, as opposed to those related to science described above. Except for architecture, other subjects of fine art were detached from function and practical value. Lu Xun drew a distinction between fine art and craft. Moreover, he elevated painting to the fine art sphere. Cai Yuanpei provided a similar point of

<sup>300</sup> Lu Xun, 'Ni bobu meishu yijianshu', in Lang and Shui, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, Vol. I, pp.10-14.

<sup>301</sup> Xu, 'Hua zhi mei yu yi', p. 29.

view on fine art in his speech at the inauguration of the National School of Fine Art in 1918.<sup>302</sup> In Cai Yuanpei's opinion, the subjects which should be taught in the schools of fine art were painting, sculpture and architecture. Sculpture and architecture originated with people's practical needs, while painting had its origins in aesthetic appreciation. Moreover, painting was more evolutionary than sculpture and architecture in China because the development of Chinese painting fitted the evolution of the global history of civilisation. In the sphere of visual arts, painting was placed on the highest rung of the new aesthetic ladder by Cai Yuanpei.

Cai Yuanpei and Lu Xun's Western perspective on art created a new picture of art in China in the twentieth century.<sup>303</sup> Moreover, the transcendent nature, philosophical attributes and unpractical value bestowed upon fine art fostered the formation of the art field in China. According to Bourdieu, an art field is an autonomous artistic world in which artistic creation or production has only the slightest reference to the economic purpose and thus represents a reversal of capitalistic principles.<sup>304</sup> The formation of the concept fine art in China in the 1910s, based on the direct transplant of a Western framework, paved the way for the upsurge in Chinese students pursuing art studies in the West in the 1920s, including Xu Beihong. The Western, transcendent and scientific attributes of fine art may have contributed to Xu Beihong's choice of Western classicism and realism as the guide for his lifelong artistic career.

To adopt a Western framework into the Chinese art world, in addition to

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<sup>302</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Guoli meishu xuexiao chengli ji kaixueshi yanshuoci' 國立美術學校成立及開學式演說詞, 'Speech at the Inauguration of National School of Fine Art', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, p. 76.

<sup>303</sup> For Cai Yuanpei and Lu Xun's contributions to the formulation of *meishu* in China, see Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde*, pp. 10-14.

<sup>304</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 29-73.

literature, painting, sculpture, architecture and music, the subjects defined in the Western light, Cai Yuanpei also added Chinese calligraphy to fine art on account of its close relationship with Chinese painting.<sup>305</sup> He argued that Chinese artists good at painting must be also masters of calligraphy. Cai Yuanpei's perspective seemingly retained literati painting on the high rung of the Chinese painting ladder. Cai Yuanpei's respect for traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy was manifested in the establishment of the Beijing University Calligraphy Research Society (*Beijing daxue shufa yanjiuhui* 北京大學書法研究會) under his directorship.<sup>306</sup> Moreover, Cai Yuanpei invited the renowned traditional Chinese painter Chen Shizeng (陳師曾, 1876-1923) to teach Chinese painting and its history at the Beijing University Painting Research Society. At a lecture on the landscape painting of the Qing dynasty, Chen Shizeng attracted a large audience of around one thousand.<sup>307</sup>

Cai Yuanpei replaced the Confucian tradition with aesthetics and art. This innovative undertaking evoked different responses. The radical intellectuals used Western art as a useful weapon with which to attack the traditional order; whereas the conservative side argued that art was the new symbol of national spirit and thus called for the preservation of the national heritage. These conflicting attitudes towards Chinese art and culture revealed the complex and contested character of the newly-formed art field in early twentieth-century China. This contradictory feature was also manifested in Xu Beihong's artistic creation and thoughts. The Western and revolutionary perspective of the progressive intelligentsia on the formation of fine art in China exerted a profound impact on Xu Beihong's aspirations to pursue art studies in France, and

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<sup>305</sup> Cai, 'Guoli meishu xuexiao chengli ji kaixueshi yanshuoci', p. 76.

<sup>306</sup> Chen, *Chumo lishi yu jinru Wusi*, pp.135-156.

<sup>307</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 1 June 1918.

on his adherence to Western realism as the resolution to the rejuvenation of Chinese art. At the same time, the relatively conservative view of art as a mirror of national essence sheds some light on Xu Beihong's seemingly abrupt turn to Chinese ink painting from the 1930s, when he quickly became a painter with national fame on account of the strong national spirit revealed in his ink paintings.

### 3.2 An Institution for the Creation of the Art Field: The Beijing University Painting Research Society

To put his idea of aesthetic education into practice, Cai Yuanpei was active in organising art societies in Beijing University. The Beijing University Music Society and the Beijing University Calligraphy Research Society were both established in 1917; and the Beijing University Painting Research Society in 1918.<sup>308</sup> Cai Yuanpei had the idea of establishing the Painting Research Society on the occasion when Chen Shizeng was invited to give a speech on Qing painting at Beijing University on 1 November 1917.<sup>309</sup> The Painting Research Society was then founded on 22 February 1918 and continued to publish its news in the university newspaper, the *University Daily*, for over ten years.<sup>310</sup> A preparatory meeting of the Society was held on 20 February 1918, at which it was stated that its aim was to gather together people sharing the same interest in art to improve their painting skills and their sense of beauty. The Society consisted of two sections, national painting section (*benguohua* 本國畫) and foreign painting section (*waiguohua* 外國畫).<sup>311</sup> Several painters were employed to teach painting, give lectures, and mount exhibitions.<sup>312</sup> The tutors of the national painting section were those active in the contemporary Beijing Chinese art world. Chen Shizeng and He Lüzhì (賀履之, 1861-1938) taught Chinese landscape and flower painting. In addition, Chen Shizeng would give speeches once a month and He Lüzhì twice a month.<sup>313</sup> Tang Dingzhi (湯定之,

<sup>308</sup> Chen, *Chumo lishi yu jinru Wusi*, pp.135-156.

<sup>309</sup> Wang Yuli 王玉立, 'Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shimo' 北京大學畫法研究會始末, 'History of the Beijing University Painting Research Society', *Taipei shili meishuguan xiandai meishu shuangyuekan* 台北市立美術館美術現代美術雙月刊, 79 (1998), pp. 58-69 (pp. 63-64).

<sup>310</sup> The Painting Research Society first published its news in the *University Daily* on 5 February 1918, stating its establishment under Cai Yuanpei's directorship. From that time the Society continued to publish its activities in the *University Daily* till at least 1930. The *University Daily* ceased publication in 1932.

<sup>311</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 26 February 1918.

<sup>312</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 9 & 11 March 1918.

<sup>313</sup> For a short account of Chen Shizeng and He Lüzhì as well as their relationship with the

1878-1948) taught Chinese landscape painting and gave speeches fortnightly.<sup>314</sup> The foreign painting section had four tutors. Li Yishi (李毅士, 1881-1942) taught watercolour and pencil drawing.<sup>315</sup> Qian Daosun (錢稻蓀) and Bei Jimei (貝季眉) gave lectures on Western art sporadically.<sup>316</sup> Xu Beihong taught watercolour, and he also taught figure painting in the national painting section. This demonstrates that Xu Beihong's early artistic accomplishments presented a hybrid style. Xu Beihong's achievements and social status were apparently not as significant as those of other national painting tutors, so he was not invited to give advertised formal speeches. Nonetheless, he provided tutorial time according to his students' needs. It appears that Xu Beihong was aspiring and diligent at the Society.

In the first year of its establishment, the Society's news often appeared in the *University Daily*. It appeared around 13 times in April, 17 times in May, 14 times in June, and 17 times in October 1918.<sup>317</sup> The news included advertisements for recruiting new members; timetables of courses and lectures;

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Beijing art world, see Xue Yongnian 薛永年, 'Minguo chuqi Beijing huatan chuantongpai de zairenshi' 民國初期北京畫壇傳統派的再認識, 'Re-examination of Traditional Painting Styles of Artists in Beijing of the Early Twentieth Century', in *Quyū yu wangluo – Jin qiannian lai Zhongguo meishushi yanjiu guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 區域與網絡 – 近千年來中國美術史研究國際學術研討會論文集, 'Region and Network – A Collection of Papers from the International Academic Research Conference on the Study of Chinese Art History over the Last One Thousand Years' (Taipei, 2001), pp. 579-604.

<sup>314</sup> Tang Dingzhi built his fame in traditional Chinese painting. He was active in the Beijing art world and had a few famous students, including the renowned actors Mei Lanfang and Cheng Yanqiu, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ye Gongchao (葉公超). Yun Ruxin 惲茹辛 ed., *Minguo shuhuajia huizhuan* 民國書畫家彙傳, 'An Index of Traditional Artists of the Republican Era' (Taipei, 2005), p. 244.

<sup>315</sup> Li Yishi was among the earliest Chinese students pursuing art studies in Europe. He studied painting in Glasgow in 1907. After returning to China, he won fame in the art world by painting Chinese historical themes in the style of Western realism. Lin, *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>316</sup> Qian Daosun was born in 1887. He studied in Japan and then taught foreign language and literature at Beijing University. Bei Jimei was Bei Shoutong (貝壽同). He was born in 1878 and was professor of the engineering faculty of Beijing University. Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, p. 78.

<sup>317</sup> Some news, in particular the lectures given by the Society's tutors and Cai Yuanpei, was published in the newspaper in serialised form. In these cases, I count that kind of news as appearing once in the press.

contents of speeches and talks; meetings and gatherings; exhibitions and other artistic activities. The talks given by the Society's tutors were often to be read in the *University Daily*; and the contents of the talks were generally published in serialised form and thus each continued to appear in the newspaper for several days. In the first year, Chen Shizeng gave talks on *Huihua yuanyu shiyongshuo* (繪畫源於實用說, 'On How Painting Originated with Practical Utility'), *Qingdai huahui zhi paibie* (清代花卉之派別, 'Schools of Qing Flower Painting'), *Qingdai zhi shanshuihua* (清代之山水畫, 'Qing Landscape Painting'), *Duiyu putong jiaoshou tuhuake zhi yijian* (對於普通教授圖畫科之意見, 'Opinions on the General Painting Course in Schools'); Tang Dingzhi on Chinese landscape painting methods; Qian Daosun on *He wei mei* (何謂美, 'What Is Beauty?'); He Lüzhi on *Zhongguo shanshuihua tan* (中國山水畫談, 'A Talk on Chinese Landscape Painting') and how to imitate ancient masterpieces; Li Yishi gave a brief account of Western painting, entitled, *Xihua lüeshuo* (西畫略說); Feng Hanshu (馮漢叔 1881-?) provided his comments on literati and professional painting, a brief account of Chinese painting history and the difference between Chinese and Western painting.<sup>318</sup> Xu Beihong gave talks on 'Beauty and Art in Painting', 'Comments on the Painting and Calligraphy Collection in the Wenhua Palace' and 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting'.<sup>319</sup> After Xu Beihong left for Paris in 1919, Gai Dashi (蓋大士, Dr Kats) succeeded him to teach oil painting and Zheng Jin (鄭錦, 1892-1959)

<sup>318</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 20 & 22 April, 15 May, 1-17 June 1918 and 10-11 January 1919; 15-16 April and 14 June 1918; 27 & 29-30 April 1918; 4, 6, 7 & 16 May 1918; 14 May 1918; 26-27 April 1918. Feng Hanshu was not included in the list of the teaching staff of the Society which was published in the *University Daily* on 26 February 1918; nonetheless, Cai Yuanpei's statement of 'the Objective of the Beijing University Painting Research Society' (北京大學畫法研究會旨趣書) indicted that Feng Hanshu had been on the teaching staff from the beginning. Feng Hanshu had studied in Japan and taught mathematics at Beijing University. He was also a calligrapher. Cai Yuanpei, 'Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui zhiquishu', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, pp. 77-79.

<sup>319</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 23 April and 10-11 & 23-25 May 1918.

taught watercolour.<sup>320</sup>

In addition to teaching painting, the Painting Research Society also organised exhibitions and elegant gatherings to improve students' ability in art appreciation. Exhibiting private collections was listed in the Society's constitution; Cai Yuanpei appointed Feng Hanshu to push ahead with this idea in his speech at the Society.<sup>321</sup> In April 1918, Xu Beihong and Bei Jimei took the Society to see an exhibition of the works of the Russian artist Ladovleff [sic] at the Russian Embassy.<sup>322</sup> In May 1918, the Society held three related activities, including displaying Zhang Weisan's (章味三) 240 volumes of *Xiaowanliutang shanmian daguan* (小萬柳堂扇面大觀, 'Xiaowanliu Studio's Comprehensive Collection of Fan Paintings') and Song hand scrolls; paying a visit to the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities; Cai Yuanpei, Li Yishi and Xu Beihong also held a meeting, in which they showed their painting catalogues.<sup>323</sup> Some articles and talks related to these activities, such as Sheng Boxuan's (盛伯宣) *Eshiguan canguanji* (俄使館參觀記, 'A Visit to the Exhibition at the Russian Embassy'), Lai Jigeng (來季賡) and Xu Beihong's opinions on the exhibition of the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities were published in the *University Daily* and the Society's magazine, *Painting Miscellany* (*Huixue zazhi* 繪學雜誌).<sup>324</sup> In addition to visiting exhibitions, the Society members also organised their own exhibitions to display their works along with Chinese paintings and the

<sup>320</sup> Dr Kats was a Belgian. He was a little-known person in the Chinese art discourse of his day. His name first appeared in the *University Daily* in November 1918 because Qian Daosun and Li Yishi led the Society to see his individual exhibition, held in the Austrian military camp in China. Later his name was listed among the teaching staff of the Society in January 1919. On Dr Kats, see *Beijing daxue rikan*, 27 November and 5 December 1918, and 18 January and 15 February 1919. Zheng Jin studied art in Japan. He was appointed director of the National School of Fine Art in 1918, and was invited to teach at the Painting Research Society from February 1919.

<sup>321</sup> Cai, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci', p. 86.

<sup>322</sup> Wang, 'Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shimo', pp. 66-67.

<sup>323</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 1 & 7-8 May 1918.

<sup>324</sup> Sheng Boxuan, 'Eshiguan canguanji', *Huixue zazhi*, 1 (1920), pp. 7-8. Lai Jigeng, 'Wenhuan canguanji' 文華殿參觀記, 'A Visit to the Wenhua Palace Exhibition', *Huixue zazhi*, 1 (1920), pp. 1-6.



calligraphic works of contemporary artists and private collectors, such as those from the collection of the eminent artist and collector, Jin Cheng (金城, 1878-1926), in the campus art fair (*youyi dahui* 游藝大會). The fair was successful, attracting more than one thousand people a day.<sup>325</sup> The Society also continued the traditional form of literati gatherings by organising an elegant gathering to enjoy the peony blossoms at Beijing's Chongxiao Temple (崇效寺).<sup>326</sup> At the gathering, Xu Beihong drew peony blossoms; Chen Shizeng also made a poem a few weeks later.<sup>327</sup> In addition, the Society organised a trip to the Western Hills (*Xishan* 西山) during the summer vacation in August 1918, attempting to develop students' keen observational skills through drawing from nature. Xu Beihong led the trip and provided six hours of courses a week.<sup>328</sup>

The frequent artistic activities of the Painting Research Society corresponded with Cai Yuanpei's expectations stated in the speeches which he gave to the Society. Cai Yuanpei criticised the fact that the traditional form of private collecting was an obstacle for Chinese painters' development of technique; he thus advocated publicising private collections and organising more exhibitions in order to allow the public to have access to authentic works of art.<sup>329</sup> Cai Yuanpei's opinion reflected the rise of exhibition culture in China, which was manifested in the establishment of the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities and in intellectuals' promotion of the building of museums to preserve the national heritage, such as advocated by Kang Youwei. Moreover, Cai Yuanpei took a relatively neutral stance when he made a comparison

<sup>325</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 21, 25 & 30 January and 6 February 1919.

<sup>326</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10 May 1918.

<sup>327</sup> Gong Chanxing 龔產興, 'Chen Shizeng nianbiao' 陳師曾年表, 'Chronology of Chen Shizeng', *Duoyun* 朵雲, 6 (1984), p. 116.

<sup>328</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 6 August 1918.

<sup>329</sup> Cai Yuanpei, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui xiuyeshi shang de yanshuoci' 在北京大學畫法研究會休業式上的演說詞, 'Speech at the end-of-term ceremony of the Beijing University Painting Research Society', in Gao, *Cai Yuanpei wenji: Meiyu*, pp. 83-84 (p. 83).

between Chinese and Western art. He argued that the different painting methods in Chinese and Western art resulted from their different cultural values. Chinese culture respected morality and thus Chinese painting emphasised the imitation of the virtues of previous masterpieces. On the other hand, Western culture valued science and consequently its painting emphasised drawing from nature. Cai Yuanpei indicated that Chinese painting should assimilate the virtues of Western painting, as the Renaissance and Rococo painting of the West had integrated Chinese elements.<sup>330</sup> His speeches at the Society apparently exerted an impact on Xu Beihong. In the article 'Beauty and Art in Painting', Xu Beihong obviously responded to Cai Yuanpei's aesthetic thoughts as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. The suggestion of establishing museums and assimilating the virtues of Western art, which Xu Beihong put forward in the other two talks which he gave in 1918, reflected the influence from Kang Youwei as well as from Cai Yuanpei. Although Kang Youwei's influence upon Xu Beihong's view on the regressive situation of present-day Chinese painting was obvious, the relatively neutral formula of reforming Chinese painting by means of 'keeping what is good in traditional Chinese painting, and adopting what is appropriate for China in Western painting' was closer to Cai Yuanpei's attitude towards Chinese tradition.<sup>331</sup> The title of the article, 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting', pointed out that its purpose was to study the painting methods, indicating that the overall article responded to Cai Yuanpei more than to Kang Youwei.

In addition to absorbing Cai Yuanpei's thoughts and manifesting them in the discursive space, Xu Beihong was also diligent in embodying them in the concrete form of his paintings. His drawing of peony blossoms at the elegant

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<sup>330</sup> Cai, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci', pp. 85-86.

<sup>331</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 39.

gathering in the Chongxiao Temple has already been mentioned and he also painted old cypresses and pines realistically during the trip to the Western Hills (Fig. 78) The paintings modelled on real scenes exemplified his emphasis on drawing from nature, also seen in his talks at the Society.<sup>332</sup> In addition, his watercolour painting, *Boshi tu* (搏獅圖, 'Fighting with a Lion'), was published in the first issue of *Painting Miscellany* in 1920 (Fig. 79). The paintings of cypresses, pines and lion demonstrated again Xu Beihong's skill in pictorial realism. The way in which Xu Beihong employed light and shade made the figure in *Fighting with a Lion* more like a statue than a person. *Fighting with a Lion* revealed a strong Western orientation. The statue-like figure and theatrical composition prefigured Xu Beihong's penchant for Western classicism and history painting, as in his oil painting, *Nuli yu shi* (奴隸與獅, 'Slave and Lion'), which was executed in 1924 when he was studying art at the École des Nationales Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (Fig. 80).

Although Xu Beihong only stayed at the Painting Research Society for one year, news of him frequently appeared in the *University Daily*. It seems that Xu Beihong attended virtually all of the activities of the Society. Besides the items of news already mentioned, Xu Beihong reported on Wu Zhihui's talk on art, which was published in the first issue of *Painting Miscellany*. In addition, he also held seminars weekly and continued to tutor during the school holidays.<sup>333</sup> After he resigned his position at the Society in January 1919, he still donated 10 *yuan* (元) to the campus art fair in February 1919, which was held by the Society to raise funds for its operation; he donated 10 *yuan* again to the Society in another fund-raising activity held in June 1919, a significant amount – as much as Hu Shi,

<sup>332</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 28 June 1918.

<sup>333</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Xu Beihong ji Wu Zhihui xiansheng meishutan' 徐悲鴻集吳稚暉先生美術談, 'Xu Beihong's Report on Wu Zhihui's Talk on Fine Art', *Huixue zazhi*, 1 (1920), pp. 2-4. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 5 December 1918.

and twice as much as He Lüzhì and Qian Daosun.<sup>334</sup> Xu Beihong's diligence at the Society brought him many students. In the autumn term of 1918, there were 22 students studying watercolour with Xu Beihong and 4 studying Chinese figure painting with him. Xu Beihong received a total of 26 students, around one third of the whole membership of the Society.<sup>335</sup> In the New Year of 1919, the Society held a farewell party for Xu Beihong at which several tutors gave talks: Dr Kats expected Xu Beihong to seek verisimilitude in his overseas studies; Chen Shizeng encouraged Xu Beihong to combine Chinese and Western art and to become an internationally-acclaimed painter; Xu Beihong himself talked of how he was indebted to the Society, the institution for promoting art, which helped Chinese artists to sharpen their skills and become internationally competitive.<sup>336</sup> Throughout his career, Xu Beihong maintained the same stance on art and on the Chinese painting tradition which he had taken during his time at Beijing University. The Painting Research Society served as a significant institution to fulfil Cai Yuanpei's aesthetic ideals, and fostered the formation of the art field in China by means of lecturing, publishing and exhibiting. Xu Beihong's experiences at the Society helped him to participate actively in various channels of artistic production in the art field after he returned to China in the later 1920s and rapidly built his national fame. He created hybrid and realistic Chinese painting, published productively, organised international Chinese painting exhibitions, and institutionalised drawing from life into Chinese art education.

The Painting Research Society did not promote art alone. It also participated in exhibitions held by other art societies. In January 1919, Yan

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<sup>334</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 19 February and 3 June 1919.

<sup>335</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 24 October 1918.

<sup>336</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 9 January 1919.

Wenliang (顏文樑, 1893-1988), later the director of Suzhou Art School (*Suzhou meishu xuexiao* 蘇州美術專校, established in 1922) then, who studied art in France in 1927, organised the Suzhou Fine Art Exposition (*Suzhou meishu caihui* 蘇州美術賽會) and invited the members of the Painting Research Society to exhibit their works.<sup>337</sup> The objective of the Exposition was for art lovers to improve one another's painting skills, sharing a similarity with the aim of the Painting Research Society and in respond to those of Cai Yuanpei. A large number of works varying in subject matter, style and medium were displayed at the Exposition. The Painting Research Society was the only art society outside the Jiangsu area to be invited to exhibit, and its members contributed sixteen works.<sup>338</sup> News of the establishment of the Fine Art Research Society of Jiangsu Province (*Jiangsusheng meishu yanjiuhui* 江蘇省美術研究會) was also published in the *University Daily*.<sup>339</sup> Liu Haisu, vice-director of the Society, stated that the aim of the Fine Art Research Society was to promote aesthetic education; it also attempted to rejuvenate the realistic virtues of Chinese painting before the Song Dynasty by means of drawing from nature, the method which contributed to the superiority of Western art. Liu Haisu's talk indicated that the Fine Art Research Society was established in response to Cai Yuanpei. Its members included Ding Song (丁悚, 1891-1972) and Zhang Yuguang, both of whom were active in the Shanghai commercial art world. Cai Yuanpei's promotion of aesthetic education changed the landscape of the Chinese art world; he fostered the birth of a vigorous Westernised art field, which accommodated agents and institutions of different circles and backgrounds. Moreover, the

<sup>337</sup> The Suzhou Fine Art Exposition was set up in 1919 and then held expositions annually till at least 1935. Tsuruta Takeyoshi ed., *Chugoku kindai bijutsu daiji nenpy* 中国近代美術大事年表, 'A Chronology of Big Events of Fine Art in Modern China' (Izumi, 1997), p. 16.

<sup>338</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 18 February 1919.

<sup>339</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 15 October 1918.

intelligentsia seemed to reach a consensus on the promotion of aesthetic education and on the realistic virtues of Western art at that time. They advocated reforming Chinese art by means of institutionalising drawing from nature, and so rejuvenating the realistic tradition of Chinese painting. This consensus also became Xu Beihong's lifelong belief.

The *University Daily* served as an important channel of alliance between different art societies. They not only legitimised their position in the art field through the *University Daily*, but they also relied on and competed with each other. Having Cai Yuanpei as director, the Beijing University Painting Research Society consequently played a crucial role in the field. It ran successfully from the first year of its establishment. Its membership kept increasing in number so it moved to bigger premises and appointed an administrator in the autumn term of 1918.<sup>340</sup> In 1919, the second year of its establishment, the Society suspended its activity from May due to the May Fourth Movement.<sup>341</sup> Its operation returned to normal in October. In 1920, the Society changed its name slightly to *Huafa yanjiusuo* (畫法研究所, 'The Painting Research Institute').<sup>342</sup> Its news appeared often in the *University Daily* again, as it had done in 1918. The timetable which was announced in the *University Daily* on 15 April 1920 revealed that its staff became larger. Both sections provided courses daily from Monday to Saturday; the tutors of the national painting section comprised He Lüzhi (landscape), Tang Dingzhi (landscape), Hu Peiheng (胡佩衡, 1891-1962, landscape), Sheng Boxuan (flower) and Tang Junbo (湯俊伯, flower); the foreign painting section included Zheng Jin (watercolour), Dr Kats (elementary oil painting and charcoal drawing), Wu Xinwu (吳新吾, 1883-1924, charcoal drawing) and Heng Weigong

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<sup>340</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 22 October and 18 November 1918.

<sup>341</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 25 September 1919.

<sup>342</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 19 January 1920. .

(衡惟公).<sup>343</sup> Nevertheless, the talks given by the tutors were seldom published in the *University Daily*, perhaps due to the issuing of the Society's own magazine, *Painting Miscellany*, in June 1920. The art-related articles published in the *University Daily* in 1920 were Cai Yuanpei's 'Origin of Art', the Chinese translation of Ernest F. Fenollosa's book, *Zhongguo Riben meishu fenqishi* (中國日本美術分期史, 'Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art'), and C. Bayet's book, *Meishushi* (美術史, 'Art History').<sup>344</sup> The Painting Research Society apparently attempted to turn itself into a professional painting institute, while the *University Daily* became purely a discursive space for art theories. The continuous publishing of art historical writings in the *University Daily* reflected an important phenomenon whereby the formulation of art history attracted the interest of Chinese artists and intellectuals. Writing and translating books on Chinese art history reached its zenith in the 1920s and 1930s. Jiang Danshu's *Meishushi* (美術史, 'Art History'), published in 1917, was the first Chinese account of art history in the modern era. He argued that Western art culminated in Italy, and Eastern art in China.<sup>345</sup> Fenollosa in his writing on Chinese art history argued that the Song dynasty was the ideal period of Chinese art.<sup>346</sup> Their views of the histories of Chinese and Western art coincided with the high praise that was given to Italian Renaissance art and to Chinese Song painting, which was pervasive among the intelligentsia. This perspective remained in subsequent

<sup>343</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 15 April 1920. Hu Peiheng was a renowned traditional painter active in the Beijing art world. He was appointed chief editor of *Painting Miscellany*. For his career at the Society, see Wang Yuli, 'Huixue zazhi yanjiu' 繪學雜誌研究, 'A Study on *Painting Miscellany*', *Taipei shili meishuguan xiandai meishu shuangyuekan*, 82 (1999), pp. 48-61 (pp. 58-60). Wu Xinwu was Wu Fading (吳法鼎), who studied oil painting in France. In addition to the Painting Research Society, he also taught at the National School of Fine Art. Later he also taught at the Junior College of Fine Arts in Shanghai. Thus he often journeyed to and fro between Beijing and Shanghai. He worked as tutor in the Painting Research Society till he died in 1923 on a journey to Shanghai.

<sup>344</sup> Cai Yuanpei's article was published in serialised form from May to June 1920; Fenollosa's from July to September 1920; Bayet's from October 1920 to April 1922.

<sup>345</sup> Shao, 'Xixue "meishushi" dongjian yibainian', pp. 110-111.

<sup>346</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 31 July 1920.

writings on Chinese art history, such as those of Teng Gu (滕固, 1901-1941), the first professional art historian in China, and in Xu Beihong's ambitions for reconstructing the rungs of the Chinese art ladder, which had been dominated by the literati philosophy.<sup>347</sup>

The *Daily News* continuously published news about other artistic activities outside the campus. A report about an exhibition of the *Huayin huahui* (花陰畫會, 'The Painting Society of Huayin') signified a close relationship between the Beijing University Painting Research Society and the Painting Society of Huayin, because many of the tutors in the Painting Research Society were also members of the Painting Society of Huayin and thus participated in the exhibition; these included Zheng Jin, Li Yishi, Wu Xinwu and Chen Shizeng, along with renowned painters of traditional painting, including Yao Hua (姚華, 1876-1930), Wang Mengbai (王夢白, 1888-1934), and Xiao Wuquan (蕭屋泉, 1865-1948).<sup>348</sup> The Painting Society of Huayin shared a great similarity with the Painting Research Society in its objective and its programme. Its aim was also to promote art through studying Chinese and Western painting methods. Its summer school also comprised two sections, Chinese painting and Western painting; each section provided a complete system of courses from elementary to advanced, catering for students of different levels.<sup>349</sup> The Painting Society of Huayin apparently attempted to serve as a more professional painting institute. Moreover,

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<sup>347</sup> Teng Gu, *Zhongguo meishu xiaoshi* 中國美術小史, 'A Concise History of Chinese Art' (Shanghai, 1939). This book was first published in 1926. On Teng Gu, see Shao, 'Xixue "meishushu" dongjian yibainian', p. 111.

<sup>348</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 8 June 1920. Chen Shizeng resigned from the Painting Research Society in October 1918. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 25 October 1918. Yao Hua gained *jinsu* degree in 1904 and then studied politics in Japan. He, with Chen Shizeng and Jin Cheng, was a leading figure of the Beijing art world. Wang Mengbai was also an influential figure in traditional art circles in Beijing. For their significance, see Wan Qingli, 'Nanfeng Beijian: Minguo chunian nanfang huajia zhudao de Beifang huatan' 南風北漸：民國初年南方畫家主導的北方畫壇, 'The Southern Painting Style in Beijing: The Leading Figures of Beijing Painting Circle in Early Republic Years', in Wan, *Wan Qingli meishu wenji*, pp. 139-161.

<sup>349</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 4 & 18 June 1920.



the establishment of the Painting Society of Huayin reflected the fact that painters of different groups and backgrounds sought to form ties of allegiance, through which they gradually shaped a distinctive art field, which was differentiated from the literary field. In other words, the art field was increasingly dominated by actual artists instead of writers.

In 1921, the Painting Research Society changed its name from *Huafa yanjiusuo* back to its original *Huafa yanjiuhui*.<sup>350</sup> During this year, the Society's visibility dropped sharply because the *University Daily* ceased publication from March to July 1921 due to financial difficulty.<sup>351</sup> Besides this external reason, the Society itself became stagnant.<sup>352</sup> News of the Society only appeared twice in the *University Daily* before March 1921, and then four times each in November and December. Nevertheless, Cai Yuanpei still maintained his momentum in promoting art. In February 1921, seven talks given by Cai Yuanpei were published in the *University Daily*, and four were centred on art, including 'The Evolution of Art', *Meixue de jinhua* (美學的進化, 'The Evolution of Aesthetics'), *Meixue de yanjiu fangfa* (美學的研究方法, 'Methods of Studying Aesthetics'), and *Meishu yu kexue de guanxi* (美術與科學的關係, 'The Relationship between Art and Science').<sup>353</sup> In addition, news about the Suzhou Fine Art Exposition was continuously published in the *University Daily*; for example, the fact that Liu Haisu was going to make a speech on *Xiandai huihua de xinqushi* (現代繪畫的新趨勢, 'New Trends of Modern Painting') on 10 January 1922.<sup>354</sup> The activity of the Shanghai art world seemingly also maintained its momentum.

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<sup>350</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 9 December 1920.

<sup>351</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 3 August 1921.

<sup>352</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 8 November 1921.

<sup>353</sup> The seven talks were a series of speeches given by Cai Yuanpei in Hunan province. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 24 & 25 February 1921.

<sup>354</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 23 & 24 December 1921.

In 1922, Beijing University encountered financial and administrative difficulties in large part due to external political turmoil.<sup>355</sup> The upheaval in the University culminated in October 1922, when Cai Yuanpei resigned, staff went on strike, the administrative system shut down, and the *University Daily* ceased publication.<sup>356</sup> News about the Painting Research Society did not appear in the *University Daily* from June 1922. In November 1922, the University managed to get back to normal and planned to celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in December. The celebration programme included an exhibition displaying works by members of the Painting Research Society.<sup>357</sup>

In 1923, the Painting Research Society and the Calligraphy Research Society were united as a single society named *Zaoxing meishu yanjiuhui* (造形美術研究會, 'The Plastic Art Research Society').<sup>358</sup> The teaching staff included Chen Shizeng, Yao Hua, Hu Peiheng, Sheng Boxuan, Wu Xinwu, Zheng Jin, Chen Qimin (陳啓民), as well as the famous calligraphers Ma Shuping (馬叔平, 1881-1955) and Shen Yinmo (沈尹默, 1883-1971); Ma Shuping was also a renowned epigrapher and was appointed director of the Beijing Palace Museum from 1934 to 1955. The courses comprised Chinese landscape painting, bird-and-flower painting, seal cutting and calligraphy, as well as Western watercolour and oil painting. The tutors of Western painting also taught at the Apollo Society (*Aboluo xuehui* 阿博洛學會) which was established in December 1922.<sup>359</sup> The Apollo Society had ten teachers, including the former tutor of the Beijing University Painting Research Society, Li Yishi. It managed to be a professional art institute, stating that its aim was to teach Western painting and to

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<sup>355</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 20 March 1922.

<sup>356</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 19 October 1922.

<sup>357</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 17 December 1922.

<sup>358</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 18 April 1923.

<sup>359</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 26 December 1922.

train professional artists. Therefore, it only accepted members with art certificates. Its summer school provided courses for those who wanted to develop their Western painting skills and those who wanted to be art teachers. Its Western painting courses included pencil drawing, charcoal drawing, watercolour and oil painting.<sup>360</sup> The structure and programme of the Apollo Society revealed that Western art had successfully entered Beijing, the place which was considered to be the stronghold of traditional Chinese painting. Moreover, its courses demonstrated that Western art had increasingly matured in China. In terms of the essence of Western painting, the figure watercolours of calendar poster painting, which were popular in the commercial market, were gradually replaced by drawing from nature and oil painting. The Plastic Art Research Society and the Apollo Society combined to foster the maturity of the art field in China, the field which was based on Western concepts of fine art and aesthetics. While the professional institute of Western art, the Apollo Society, was established, a complete unified institute of Chinese art was also formed through the consolidation of the painting and calligraphy societies at Beijing University. The combination of Chinese painting and calligraphy in a single society would provide a complete system of Chinese art education, and maintain the pivotal role of calligraphy in Chinese painting. Furthermore, combining Chinese painting and calligraphy under the name of plastic art demonstrated traditional painters' endeavours to modernise traditional Chinese painting. With the increasing completeness of Western art learning in China, and the gradual modernisation of Chinese painting in Western terms, the art field in China reached maturity and presented its singular complexity and diversity.

Through teaching, exhibiting, collecting, and publishing, the Beijing

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<sup>360</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 11 June 1923.

University Painting Research Society presented artistic activities in the domain of fine art, well beyond the utilitarian interests that had been assigned to art in the Qing period. It thus served as an important institution to embody Cai Yuanpei's art ideals and helped the formation of an art field in China. This art field, which was structured in Western terms, helped to raise the importance of Western painting in China. Western art was able to be perceived in its own terms. Its essence was acknowledged and its practice was considered as the better framework for learning painting. Western art thus gradually transferred from being a popular practice in the commercial market to a legitimised subject in the academic field. By contrast, Chinese painting had to re-define its identity within this pro-Western framework of art which presented some points of conflict with traditional Chinese art, such as the learning devices, subjects and standards of art. The shifts of names and programmes of the Painting Research Society demonstrated the efforts which Chinese painting had made to adapt itself to this newly-formed art field. Calligraphy and painting, used to be termed *shuhua* (書畫), had formed a set of practices in traditional Chinese painting. Nonetheless, they were divided into two separate associations when the Painting Research Society and the Calligraphy Research Society were established respectively at Beijing University in response to the promulgation of *meishu*. Although these two societies were later consolidated, they used 'plastic art', instead of 'calligraphy and painting', as the new name of this unified society. These adjustments within traditional Chinese painting revealed the fact that the concept of fine art met with broad acceptance in China, and further transformed the nature of the Chinese art world. A new Westernised art field was thus established, in which were accommodated two competing systems of painting, presenting the singular dichotomy and dynamics in the art field of twentieth-century China.

In 1923 and 1924, the Plastic Art Research Society still ran actively. News of its courses, exhibitions and publications was often published in the *University Daily*. Nevertheless, this activity was not as vigorous as it had been in the 1910s, because the political situation in Beijing was so disorderly that it threatened the operation of the University.<sup>361</sup> News about the Apollo Society did not appear in the *University Daily* after the first year of its establishment. Cai Yuanpei resigned again from Beijing University in 1927 and never returned. Many intellectuals and artists also moved down to the South. With new academic institutions of fine art established in the southern cities, such as Hangzhou and Nanjing, and with more and more students who had studied in Europe returning, the landscape of the art field in China also changed. Accompanied by the rise of new agencies, there came into being new forces dominating the art field. As a consequence, the significance of the art society at Beijing University was marginalised.

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<sup>361</sup> For example, Cai Yuanpei resigned again in 1923 due to his deep disappointment with the Beijing government. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 19-20 January and 30 June 1923..

### 3.3 A Contested Art Field

The journal *Painting Miscellany* was launched in June 1920. The second issue was published in January 1921, and the third one in November 1921. Hu Peiheng was the chief editor. It gained popularity from the beginning. The outlets where it was stocked increased from one to six when the second issue was published, and further spread to Shanghai and Tianjin when the third one was issued.<sup>362</sup> The talks addressed by Cai Yuanpei and the tutors of the Painting Research Society made up the largest part of *Painting Miscellany*. Cai Yuanpei's talks on art, which were published in the *University Daily*, were also collected in the *Painting Miscellany*, talks such as his 'Origin of Art' in the first and second issues; 'The Evolution of Art', 'The Evolution of Aesthetics', 'Methods of Studying Aesthetics' and 'The Relationship between Art and Science' in the third issue. The tutors' lectures, along with the Society's exhibitions and gatherings, which were published in the *University Daily* were collected in the *Painting Miscellany* as well. Some tutors contributed more articles, such as Chen Shizeng's *Wenrenhua de jiazhi* (文人畫的價值, 'The Value of Literati Painting', second issue), and *Zhongguohua shi jinbu de* (中國畫是進步的, 'Chinese Painting Is Progressive', third issue); Wu Fading published *Helan huashi Rembrandt zhi lishi* (和蘭畫師藍布郎 Rembrandt 之歷史, 'An Account of the Dutch Painter Rembrandt', first issue), and *Xihuaajia Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1519 zhi lishi* (西畫家黎有拉文喜 Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1519 之歷史, 'An Account of the Western painter, Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519', second issue); Dian Daosun in his article, *Hua xing* (畫形, 'Form in Painting', third issue), translated the first chapter of the book, *Essentials in Art*, written by the Swedish historian of Chinese art, Osvald Sirén (1879-1966). In addition, the

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<sup>362</sup> Wang, 'Huixue zazhi yanjiu'.

talks given by renowned figures, such as Wu Zhihui's talk on art, and Jin Cheng's speech at Beijing University in 1919, were also published in the third issue of the magazine.<sup>363</sup> *Painting Miscellany* also published reports about significant events and activities in the art world, such as the establishment of the first National School of Fine Art in Beijing in 1918, the Suzhou Fine Art Exposition, and the 1917 Beijing Exhibition of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, which was recorded in Chen Shizeng's *Duhua tu* (讀畫圖, 'Studying Painting', 1917) (Fig. 81).<sup>364</sup> *Painting Miscellany* thus served as an efficient channel for the distribution of art thought, and as the epitome of the art world.

Xu Beihong's talk 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting' was published in the first issue of *Painting Miscellany*, along with his report on Wu Zhihui's talk and news about his farewell party. In 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting', Xu Beihong criticised the fact that Chinese painters did not develop keen observational skills. They followed pictorial conventions instead of drawing from nature. Therefore, Chinese painters painted trees but could not recognise what trees they were depicting.<sup>365</sup> Xu Beihong's attack on the traditionalism of Chinese painters was refuted by Tu Fengyuan (涂鳳元), also a member of the Painting Research Society.<sup>366</sup> Tu Fengyuan argued that painters all over the world could not recognise the trees they were painting. He was unhappy about the progressive attitude of negating tradition in all respects, and disapproved of Xu Beihong's worshipping everything foreign. Tu Fengyuan's reaction to Xu Beihong's argument reflected the conflicting and

<sup>363</sup> Jin Cheng's speech and Chen Shizeng's article 'The Value of Literati Painting' are also collected in Lang and Shui, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, Vol. I, pp. 43-47 and 61-73.

<sup>364</sup> Chen Shizeng made this painting to record the 'Exhibition for the Relief Fund' held in the Central Park (中央公園) in Beijing from 1 December 1917. Gong Chanxing in his research on Chen Shizeng's life pointed out that Chen made this painting on 24 February 1918, though this painting is generally dated 1917. See Gong Chanxing, 'Chen Shizeng nianbiao', p. 116.

<sup>365</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 43.

<sup>366</sup> Tu Fengyuan, 'Duhua congtao' 讀畫叢談, 'Comments on Studying Painting', *Huixue zazhi*, 2 (1921), pp. 15-16.

diversified attributes of the art world, revealing the challenges which China encountered in the endeavours to integrate Western pictorial elements into Chinese painting. This diversity is also manifested in the illustrations attached to the *Painting Miscellany*. The first issue published Xu Beihong's watercolour *Fighting with a Lion* (Fig. 79), Li Yishi's history painting *Zhang Chang huamei* (張敞畫眉, 'Zhang Chang Helping His Wife to Draw Eyebrows') (Fig. 82), Lai Jigeng's watercolour of the Western Hills (Fig. 83) and He Lüzhì's landscape painting (Fig. 84). Xu Beihong's watercolour revealed his inclination towards a Western mode of working, but did not yet manifest his later distinctive personal style. Lai Jigeng's watercolour responded to the emphasis on drawing from nature, which was put forward by Cai Yuanpei and the tutors of Western painting. Li Yishi's painting presented his endeavours to depict Chinese historical subjects with Western realistic skills. Xu Beihong's later history painting, which brought him fame in the 1920s and 1930s, showed a similar hybrid style to Li Yishi's work. This hybrid style reflected the call for modernising Chinese art and culture with Western scientific civilisation, which was pervasive in the fields of art and knowledge. He Lüzhì's landscape painting was executed with a typical Chinese painting vocabulary. The juxtaposition of Chinese and Western style paintings revealed the distinctive phenomenon of China's art field, whose conflicted feature was exemplified in the argument between Tu Fengyuan and Xu Beihong.

As its name pointed out, the Painting Research Society aimed to study painting methods. As a consequence, discussing painting methods was a focus of *Painting Miscellany*. Chen Shizeng in the article 'Opinions on the General Painting Course in Schools' argued that painting methods comprised copying manuals, drawing from nature, and painting from memory, and that copying manuals was the most essential. Chen Shizeng approved of *Jieziyuan huapu* (芥



子園畫譜, 'The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting') as a useful manual for copying as it revealed the clear procedure for executing a Chinese painting. By means of imitating the brushwork, colour and composition of masterpieces, one was then able to represent the spirit (*qiyun* 氣韻) of a painting. *Qiyun* was the key to transforming a thing into a work of fine art (*meishu*). Chen Shizeng criticised that drawing from nature could only represent verisimilitude without *qiyun*, and thus could not make a painting a real work of fine art.<sup>367</sup> Chen Shizeng's defence for the traditional method of learning painting easily found acceptance among the tutors of Chinese painting in the Painting Research Society. Tang Dingzhi in his lecture indicated that the two stages of learning painting were copying *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* first and then imitating masterpieces.<sup>368</sup> By contrast, the Chinese painting conventions of imitating were criticised by the tutors of Western painting. Dr Kats disagreed with having imitating as the vehicle for learning painting, because artists would be deprived of creative ability. To develop artistic technique, a painter thus should draw from nature.<sup>369</sup> At Xu Beihong's farewell party, Dr Kats emphasised that the aim of painting was to pursue verisimilitude.<sup>370</sup> Li Yishi concurred with Dr Kats' opinion. In his talk on Western painting, Li Yishi argued that drawing from nature was essential in learning Western painting.<sup>371</sup> Xu Beihong in 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting' had blamed imitation for the regression of Chinese painting in modern times.<sup>372</sup> At the end-of-term ceremony in June 1918, Xu Beihong also concurred with Li Yishi's

<sup>367</sup> Chen Shizeng, 'Duiyu putong jiaoshou tuhuake zhi yijian', *Huixue zazhi* 1 (1920), pp. 9-12. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10 & 11 January 1919.

<sup>368</sup> 'Tang Dingzhi tanhua biji' 湯定之談話筆記, 'Notes of Tang Dingzhi's Lecture', *Huixue zazhi* 1 (1920), p.2. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 14 June 1918.

<sup>369</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 22 February 1919.

<sup>370</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 9 January 1919.

<sup>371</sup> Li Yishi, 'Xihua lüeshuo' 西畫略說, 'A Short Account of Western Painting', *Huixue zazhi* 1 (1920), pp. 16-17. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10 May 1918.

<sup>372</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 39.

argument, stressing that learning painting should draw from nature and seek verisimilitude. Xu Beihong suggested that students might start with drawing from casts and then drawing from nature.<sup>373</sup>

These opposite approaches towards learning painting came to a compromise in Cai Yuanpei and Wu Zhihui's talks. Cai Yuanpei in his talk given at the Painting Research Society in October 1919 analysed the characteristics of Chinese and Western painting respectively. He indicated that Chinese painting originated in imitation and Western painting in drawing from nature. Cai Yuanpei took a relatively neutral attitude towards the different methods of learning painting in China and the West. He argued that different painting methods resulted from different cultures, and thus he approved of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* as a model for learning painting in China. Nevertheless, in terms of studying fine art, Cai Yuanpei advocated learning Western realistic rendering and employing scientific methods.<sup>374</sup> Several of Cai Yuanpei's talks revealed that he was partial to Western painting methods in terms of the best way forward for Chinese painting. For example, in the speech 'The Evolution of Art', Cai Yuanpei pointed out that Western painting was much more advanced than Chinese painting in its use of light and shade, perspective, the creation of atmospheric effects, and the realistic depiction of figures.<sup>375</sup> Wu Zhihui in his talk also indicated that what Chinese and Western painting methods sought was different. Western painting pursued mimetic illusionism and mastery of light and shade, whereas Chinese painting stressed brushwork and sought spiritual likeness (*shensi* 神似).<sup>376</sup> Wu Zhihui's judgement on the standing of

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<sup>373</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 28 June 1918.

<sup>374</sup> Cai, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci', p. 86.

<sup>375</sup> Cai, 'Meishu de jinhua', p. 134.

<sup>376</sup> Xu, 'Xu Beihong ji Wu Zhihui xiansheng meishutan'.

Chinese and Western painting was also relatively impartial. He argued that both Chinese and Western painting sought a kind of art which went beyond complete duplication of nature in pursuit of human creation, although their painting practices were different. Both Cai Yuanpei and Wu Zhihui's perspectives can find a response in Xu Beihong's 'Beauty and Art in Painting'. Cai Yuanpei's promotion of aesthetics seems to have had a far-reaching influence and to have formed a consensus among both artists and intellectuals.

The aforementioned talks showed the formulation of the dichotomy between Chinese and Western painting methods. Chinese painting was perceived as traditional and regressive, whereas Western painting was realistic and advanced. This dichotomy was pervasive in the fields of art and knowledge at that time. The announcement of the establishment of the Fine Art Research Society of Jiangsu Province argued that the lack of realistic renderings in early modern Chinese painting turned Chinese painting from fine art to 'poor art' (*eshu* 惡術).<sup>377</sup> The Suzhou Fine Art Exposition also rejected the works involving imitation.<sup>378</sup> The most frequently cited example is that of Chen Duxiu, who drew on the dichotomy to attack the traditionalism of Chinese painting and who advocated reforming Chinese painting by adopting the realistic spirit of Western painting.<sup>379</sup> With the pro-Western framework of art taking shape, the formulation of the dichotomy between Chinese and Western painting methods helped result in the superiority of Western art and realism in new fine art terms.

To defend the status of literati painting in Chinese art, the Chinese painting tutors of the Painting Research Society took advantage of its own magazine, the *Painting Miscellany*, to refute disapproving views on Chinese pictorial practices.

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<sup>377</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 15 October 1918.

<sup>378</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 8 February 1919.

<sup>379</sup> Chen, 'Meishu geming', pp. 85-86.

Besides affirming the significance of imitation as a device for learning painting, the tutors also defend the artistic accomplishments of the Four Wangs. Chen Shizeng in his talk on Qing landscape painting praised the achievements of Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi. He indicated that Wang Hui's works integrated the virtues of different painting schools (Fig. 85). He further argued that the atmospheric effect and perspective in Wang Hui's and Wang Yuanqi's paintings could compete with Western painting.<sup>380</sup> Hu Xiyu (胡錫佑) in his article *Lun Wang Shigu* (論王石谷, 'On Wang Shigu') provided a comprehensive study of Wang Hui's paintings, and he argued that not all of Wang Hui's works were bad.<sup>381</sup> It appears that these defences of the established mainstream of Chinese painting were designed to contradict the radicals' attack, in particular Chen Duxiu's promotion of a revolution to overthrow the Four Wangs as the canon of Chinese painting in his frequently-cited article 'Art Revolution'.<sup>382</sup> Established by Chen Duxiu, dean of the College of Literature of Beijing University, the journal *New Youth* served as a pivotal medium for the distribution of the thinking of the progressive intellectuals, in particular of those of Beijing University. For example, the published version of Cai Yuanpei's monumental talk 'On the Replacement of Religion with Aesthetic Education' first appeared in the August 1917 issue of *New Youth*; and Chen Duxiu's own 'Art Revolution' was in the January 1918 issue. *New Youth* became representative of the radical side in the debates over the development of Chinese painting in the modern era. *Painting Miscellany* and *New Youth* both published Cai Yuanpei's speeches on art, and thus they served as the seminal publications for the promulgation of fine art in

<sup>380</sup> Chen Shizeng, 'Qingdai shanshui zhi paibie' 清代山水之派別, 'Schools of Qing Landscape Painting', *Huixue zazhi*, 1 (1920), pp. 3-8. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 1 June 1918.

<sup>381</sup> Hu Xiyu, 'Lun Wang Shigu', *Huixue zazhi* 2 (1921), pp. 16-17.

<sup>382</sup> Gao Xindan 高昕丹, 'Shixi "Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi" de chengwen qingjing' 試析《文人畫之價值》的成文情境, 'An Analysis of the Historical Context of "The Value of Literati Painting"', *Besides* 左右, 3 (2001), pp. 181-191.

China. Their conflicting stances on Chinese tradition demonstrated the contested forces in the fine art field, as well as the challenges that Chinese painters had to face in the institution of a Western art framework in China. The diversity also existed within the Painting Research Society itself. As regards Wang Hui, Hu Peiheng's opinion was different from Chen Shizeng's. He took a relatively critical perspective on Wang Hui, criticising Wang Hui for performing too much craftsmanship, his paintings with the effect that left little space for spiritual resonance (*qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動).<sup>383</sup> Hu Peiheng's view of Wang Hui was similar to Xu Beihong's on Lang Shining. Xu Beihong praised Lang Shining's craftsmanship, which was far better than that of Chinese painters; nonetheless, his paintings could not evoke viewers' spiritual resonance.<sup>384</sup> As regards Lang Shining, another tutor, Feng Hanshu, completely disapproved of his painting skills.<sup>385</sup> Although there existed a variety of opinions, spiritual resonance, which was believed to be obtained through calligraphic and anti-realistic brushwork, had been acknowledged as the essence of Chinese painting and the criterion for the judgement of a painting's value.

The principles of Chinese painting, such as seeking spiritual resonance at the expense of formal likeness and legitimising imitation as the principal method of learning painting, were gradually regarded as outdated in the formulation of *meishu*, which valued realism and drawing from nature, the essence of Western art. Nevertheless, the seemingly conservative tutors of national painting endeavoured to modernise traditional art by adapting Chinese painting to the new framework of fine art; among them, Chen Shizeng was the principal figure. He was raised in a scholar-official family, which enabled him to cultivate literati

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<sup>383</sup> Wang, 'Huixue zazhi yanjiu', p. 55.

<sup>384</sup> Xu, 'Ping Wenhuanian suocang shuhua', p. 35.

<sup>385</sup> Feng Hanshu, 'Feng Hanshu jiangyanlu' 馮漢叔講演錄, 'A Record of Feng Hanshu's Speech', *Huixue zazhi*, 1 (1920), pp. 4-5. *Beijing daxue rikan*, 26 April 1918.

painting accomplishments. Moreover, he studied in Japan for seven years (1902-1909). Therefore, he could invoke Japanese and Western references to defend literati painting, and he became an esteemed leader of the Beijing art world of his day.<sup>386</sup> The second issue of *Painting Miscellany* published Chen Shizeng's 'The Value of Literati Painting', which became a beacon of hope for those painters, who continued executing literati painting in the pro-Western context in twentieth-century China. The classical Chinese version of 'The Value of Literati Painting', *Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi* (文人畫之價值), was published in the book entitled, *Zhongguo Wenrenhua zhi yanjiu* (中國文人畫之研究, 'Studies of Chinese Literati Painting'), which was published in 1922.<sup>387</sup> The book also collected the other essay, *Wenrenhua zhi fuxing* (文人畫之復興, 'The Revival of Literati Painting'), which was written by the Japanese scholar, Ōmura Seigai (大村西崖, 1868-1927), and which was translated by Chen Shizeng to classical Chinese. *Studies of Chinese Literati Painting* gained great success and was reprinted eight times in the following few years.<sup>388</sup> The publishing of a series of treatises on literati painting reflected the intensive debate over the significance of literati painting in twentieth-century China, debates in which Chen Shizeng's essays became the most powerful weapon of the traditional camp.

To modernise literati painting, Chen Shizeng was not only diligent in publishing essays in *Painting Miscellany* but also endeavoured to appreciate literati painting in the terms of Cai Yuanpei, whose articles were the focus of the magazine. As mentioned above, Cai Yuanpei argued that Western painting was more advanced than Chinese painting in its perspective and atmospheric effects.

<sup>386</sup> Aida-Yuen Wong, 'A New Life for Literati Painting in the Early Twentieth Century: Eastern Art and Modernity, a Transcultural Narrative?', *Artibus Asiae*, 60.2 (2000), pp. 297-326 (p. 307); also Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style painting in Modern China* (Honolulu, 2006).

<sup>387</sup> Chen Shizeng, *Zhongguo Wenrenhua zhi yanjiu* 中國文人畫之研究, 'Studies of Chinese Literati Painting' (Shanghai, 1941).

<sup>388</sup> Gao, 'Shixi "Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi" de chengwen qingjing', p. 181.

Chen Shizeng also indicated that the composition and brushwork of Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi's works had represented these virtues. Moreover, to respond to Cai Yuanpei's evolutionary theory of art, Chen Shizeng also employed an evolutionary perspective on the development of Chinese painting in the two articles, 'On How Painting Originated with Practical Utility' and 'Chinese Painting Is Progressive'. Chen Shizeng elucidated that painting originated with picturing. Their difference lay in their practical functions. Picturing possessed strong functions, such as for the purposes of decoration, preaching and recording, in opposition to the amusement intentions of painting. Accordingly, images made for temples, palaces and historical documents in old China could not be considered as paintings on the ground of their practical ends.<sup>389</sup> This distinction between picturing (*tu* 圖) and painting (*hua* 畫) is an old issue in traditional Chinese painting.<sup>390</sup> Chen Shizeng re-formulated it within the Western evolutionary framework in response to Cai Yuanpei's evolutionary view of the development of painting in the 'The Evolution of Art'.<sup>391</sup> Chen Shizeng's argument appeared to controvert Kang Youwei's praise for realistic ruled-line painting as the representative of highly developed Chinese art, and to refute the statement that Chinese painting in modern times, which retained the expressive and unpractical feature of literati painting, was regressive. Chen Shizeng clearly expressed his disapproval of this statement in the article 'Chinese Painting Is Progressive'.<sup>392</sup> Xu Beihong was the tutor of the Painting Research Society, who made clearly the statement that modern Chinese painting was regressive in his

<sup>389</sup> Chen Shizeng, 'Huihua yuanyu shiyongshuo', *Beijing daxue rikan*, 20 & 22 April 1918; also *Huixue zazhi* 1 (1920), pp. 17-19.

<sup>390</sup> Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (London, 1997), pp. 104-111.

<sup>391</sup> Cai, 'Meishu de jinhua', pp. 133-134.

<sup>392</sup> Chen Chiyu 陳池瑜, 'Chen Shizeng Zhongguohua jinbulun zhi yiyi' 陳師曾中國畫進步論之意義, 'The Meaning of Chen Shizeng's View of Progressivism of Chinese Painting', *Dongnan daxue xuebao* 東南大學學報, 8.5 (2006), pp. 94-99 (p. 96).

article 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting'.<sup>393</sup>

In the article 'The Value of Literati Painting', Chen Shizeng further invoked Western support to formulate his argument that literati painting, which represented the so-called 'regressive Chinese painting in modern times', was as advanced as Western painting. At the beginning of the article, Chen Shizeng indicated that spirit (*xingling* 性靈) and intelligence (*sixiang* 思想) were the key components of literati painting.<sup>394</sup> This spiritual element coincided with Cai Yuanpei's emphasis on the transcendental aspect of fine art. Accordingly, Chinese painting was credited with possessing the aesthetic quality of fine art. Moreover, Chen Shizeng compared the spiritual intention of literati painting with the subjective tendency in Western modern art, which was embodied in such movements as Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism.<sup>395</sup> By paralleling the evolutionary pattern of modern Chinese and Western painting, Chen Shizeng asserted that the subjective and spiritual pursuit in literati painting coincided with Western modernist trends, and thus that literati painting was advanced. Chen Shizeng's argument demonstrated his extensive knowledge of Western art, and challenged the stereotype that literati painters were conservative. Chen Shizeng's way of appreciating literati painting in a Western light responded to Cai Yuanpei's expectations of employing scientific methods to study fine art, which he had declared in the speech at the Painting Research Society.<sup>396</sup> Nonetheless, Chen Shizeng's scientific attitude was manifested in his profound knowledge and discursive eloquence, instead of in pictorial realism as Cai Yuanpei suggested. This diversity of viewpoints and interpretations on a single topic became typical of the art field of early twentieth-century China.

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<sup>393</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 39.

<sup>394</sup> Wong, 'A New Life for Literati Painting in the Early Twentieth Century', p. 306.

<sup>395</sup> Chen, 'Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi', p. 72.

<sup>396</sup> Cai, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci', p. 86.



In addition to Chen Shizeng, Hu Peiheng also endeavoured to modernise the image of literati painting. To dispute the pervasive attack on the lack of emphasis of drawing from nature in Chinese painting, Hu Peiheng, in the essay, *Zhongguohua xiezheng de wenti* (中國畫寫生的問題, 'Problems of Drawing from Nature in Chinese Painting'), argued that Chinese artists learnt the regional landscapes of China through the brushwork of earlier painters. To realistically render the distinctive landscape of a region, Chinese painters invented various kinds of brushstrokes. Imitation was seminal in Chinese painting learning because Chinese painters had to learn the appropriate brushwork in order to precisely represent nature in paint.<sup>397</sup> Drawing from nature was considered as the key to the dichotomy between Chinese and Western painting, and to the reversal of their standing in modern times. It thus became an important issue in the art field. The third issue of *Painting Miscellany* published several essays on drawing from nature, such as *Jixie de xiesheng* (機械的寫生, 'Mechanically Drawing from Nature') and *Xiesheng de wojian* (寫生的我見, 'My View of Drawing from Nature'), in addition to Hu Peiheng's 'Problems of Drawing from Nature in Chinese Painting'.<sup>398</sup> Although the Painting Research Society contained tutors of Chinese and Western painting, its magazine seemingly became the voice of the traditional camp. The aforementioned essays contributed by the tutors of Chinese painting revealed their anxiety over the gradual dominance of drawing from nature in China's art world, something which brought Western realism into the mainstream of the fine art realm and increasingly threatened the superiority of the expressive and symbolic brushwork of Chinese literati painting. To reverse the waning fate of literati

<sup>397</sup> Hu Peiheng, 'Zhongguohua xiezheng de wenti' 中國畫寫生的問題 'Problems of Drawing from Nature in Chinese Painting', *Huixue zazhi*, 3 (1921), pp. 3-7.

<sup>398</sup> Zhang Weilian 張威廉, 'Jixie de xiesheng', *Huixue zazhi*, 3 (1921), pp. 7-11; Yu Zongjie 余宗杰, 'Xiesheng de wojian', *Huixue zazhi*, 3 (1921), pp. 11-17.

painting in the twentieth century, the traditional camp engaged in modernising Chinese painting, while preserving its traditional essence. Chen Shizeng's Western perspective on literati painting was echoed in other traditional circles. The *Guohua tekan* (國畫特刊, 'Special Issue on National Painting'), which was edited by the *Guohua yanjiuhui* (國畫研究會, 'Chinese Painting Research Society') in 1926, published several articles to compare the development of Chinese painting with the Western art trend, articles with titles such as *Biaoxian zhuyi yu Zhongguo huihua* (表現主義與中國繪畫, 'Expressionism and Chinese Painting').<sup>399</sup> *Zhongguo huaxue yanjiuhui* (中國畫學研究會, 'The Chinese Painting Research Society'), of which Chen Shizeng was a leading member, aimed to study ancient methods of Chinese painting and to assimilate new knowledge.<sup>400</sup> Its purpose represented the strategies that the tutors of the Painting Research Society adopted to consolidate the significance of literati painting in the twentieth century.

The *Painting Miscellany* was planning to publish a fourth issue and appointed Chen Shizeng as the chief editor.<sup>401</sup> However, this fourth issue was not published and Chen Shizeng died in 1923. His posthumous essay *Zhuanke xiaoshi* (篆刻小識, 'Some Knowledge about Seal Cutting') was published in the first issue of *Zaoxing meishu zazhi* (造形美術雜誌, 'The Magazine of Plastic Art') in 1924.<sup>402</sup> This magazine succeeded *Painting Miscellany* and altered its title following the change of name and structure of the Painting Research Society. Articles on traditional Chinese painting remained the focus of the magazine, including the essays of Chen Shizeng, Hu Peiheng, Yao Hua, as well as some

<sup>399</sup> Chen, 'Chen Shizeng Zhongguohua jinbulun zhi yiyi', p. 98.

<sup>400</sup> The Society was established by Jin Cheng in Beijing in 1920. Gao, 'Shixi "Wenrenhua zhi jiazhi" de chengwen qingjing', pp. 186-187.

<sup>401</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 26 May 1922.

<sup>402</sup> Chen Shizeng, 'Zhuanke xiaoshi', *Zaoxing meishu zazhi*, 1 (1924), pp. 1-3.

articles on Chinese painting and Oriental art translated from foreign treatises.<sup>403</sup> *Painting Miscellany* served as a pivotal device for assimilating and institutionalizing both Cai Yuanpei's aesthetic ideals, and the neologism *meishu*, which fostered the formation of the Westernised art field in China. It accommodated two conflicting forces, which were derived from two opposite art systems. The conflicting feature represented the complexity of China's art field and foresaw the debates and difficulties Chinese painters encountered on the grounds of the large-scale transplant of a Western art framework in an art world dominated by calligraphy and literati philosophy. The two conflicting forces consolidated their significance in the art field by means of claims about legitimising Western realism and modernising Chinese painting respectively. The discursive practices Xu Beihong learnt at the Society, as well as from the eloquent intellectuals of the Beijing University, such as Cai Yuanpei and Chen Duxiu, were manifested in the discursive space of the 1929 National Art Exhibition, where Xu Beihong made a reputation by both his eloquence in the discursive space and his provocative gesture of absenting himself from the exhibition space.<sup>404</sup> The 1929 Art Exhibition was the first state-sponsored nationwide art festival. The variety in its repertoire and participants demonstrated the maturity of the art field in China, and underlay the conflicted nature of this art exhibition. Xu Beihong's defence of realism, intellectual eloquence, and progressive manner saw a continuation of his experience at the Beijing University.

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<sup>403</sup> It published Hu Pengheng's *Zhongguo shanshuihua diantafa* (中國山水畫點苔法, 'Methods of Dotting in Chinese Landscape Painting'), Yao Hua's *Zhongguo tupu yuanliukao* (中國圖譜源流考, 'A Study of the Origins of Chinese Manuals'), and Sawamura Sentarō's (澤村專太郎) speech, 'The Spirit of the Eastern Art' (東洋美術の精神, 'The Spirit of Eastern Art'), *Zaoxing meishu zazhi*, 1 (1924).

<sup>404</sup> This part will be studied in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

More importantly, Xu Beihong's promotion of and teaching on drawing from nature at the Society underlay his later dedication to the institutionalisation of realism. Drawing natural objects and scenes which Xu Beihong suggested in the learning of painting shows the advanced role that he played in the institutionalisation of Western art teaching in China. The previous chapter has elaborated the wide circulation of Western realistic skills in both early art institutes and the commercial market in China. Nonetheless, drawing from nature was not on the curriculum until Li Shutong (李叔同, 1880-1942) taught at the Zhejiang Normal School (*Zhejiang liangji shifan xuetao* 浙江兩級師範學堂) in 1912. Li Shutong first taught students painting by means of drawing casts and still life compositions. Later, in 1914, he became the first teacher in China to use live models to teach painting at the School.<sup>405</sup> By comparison, in the Shanghai Art Academy, which might have been the most representative institute of teaching Western art in early twentieth-century China, imitation was still the dominant mechanism for teaching and learning painting. Chen Baoyi recalled the difficulties that he encountered when he introduced drawing from nature into the Shanghai Art Academy in around 1915 because of the dominance of imitation on the campus.<sup>406</sup> Lai Haisu supported Chen Baoyi's method of teaching painting but also met many difficulties in finding models. The exhibition of nude figure drawings in 1917 brought the Shanghai Art Academy under severe attack.<sup>407</sup> These serious disputes and conflicts over life drawing in China continued into the 1920s.<sup>408</sup> It took a great deal of effort and a very long

<sup>405</sup> Li Chao 李超, *Zhongguo bainian youhuashi* 中國百年油畫史, 'A Century of Chinese Oil Painting' (Shanghai, 2007), p. 58.

<sup>406</sup> Chen, 'Yanghua yundong guocheng lueji', *Shanghai yishu yuekan*, 7-8 (1942), pp. 144-146.

<sup>407</sup> For a study of this event, see Chou Fangmei 周芳美, 'Ershi shiji chu Zhongguo huihua zhong nanxing luoti xingxiang de gaibian' 二十世紀初中國繪畫中男性裸體形象的改變, 'Changes over the images of male nudes in early twentieth-century Chinese painting', *Renwen xuebao* 26 (2002), pp. 97-142 (pp. 104-105).

<sup>408</sup> Li, *Zhongguo bainian youhuashi*, pp. 65-66.

time for the Chinese audience to eventually accept life drawing and the public display of nudes. Xu Beihong's paintings from the portrait of Kang Youwei in the style of Shanghai commercial art to *Fighting with a Lion* rendered with the practice of drawing casts demonstrate the shifts in art teaching and learning in China (Figs 13 & 79). These paintings also represent Xu Beihong's keen concerns over the latest knowledge of fine art in China, as well as his endeavours in upgrading his status from commercial artisan to fine art painter. He might have been influenced by the call for drawing from nature that had emerged in southern China in the mid-1910s and assimilated it into his teaching in Beijing. Xu Beihong had participated in the early institutionalisation of Western art teaching in the 1910s. Later he acquired a rigorous training in Western academic realism and brought back to China a more systematic teaching of fine art in the 1920s. The Beijing University Painting Research Society provided a stage for Xu Beihong to disseminate and develop his artistic philosophy revolving around fine art and realism. His efforts in the institutionalisation of life drawing and realism throughout his life exerted a great impact on China's art education and in turn brought about his prestigious status in China's art world.

## Chapter 4 The Translation of Realism

### 4.1 Xu Beihong's Art Studies in Paris

Following the pilgrimage to study art in the West, which started to flourish from the late 1910s among Chinese students, Xu Beihong embarked on a Japanese cargo boat for London with more than 90 students of the Sino-French work-study scheme in March 1919. In his journey to Paris, Xu Beihong stopped at London, where he visited the British Museum, National Gallery and Royal Academy of Arts.<sup>409</sup> The artworks which drew his attention were the Parthenon sculptures (447-432 B.C.), the paintings of the Spaniard Diego Velázquez (1599-1660), and of the British artists John Constable (1776-1837) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), the American portraitist John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), and the British academic painter Charles Sims (1873-1928). Xu Beihong arrived in Paris on 20 May 1919. The first place he rushed to visit was the Louvre, where he saw Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, as well as paintings of Raphael and Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825). In addition, he paid a visit to the retrospective exhibition of the academic painter Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), which was held at the Luxemburg Museum (Fig. 86).<sup>410</sup> He also went to the Salon, where the works of Léon Bonnat (1833-1922), Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921), Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929), François Flameng (1856-1923), Albert Besnard (1849-1934), Léon-Augustin L'Hermitte (1844-1925), and Fernand Cormon (1854-1924) were on display.<sup>411</sup> The aforementioned painters either represented realistic craftsmanship in their works, or had some association with the Western classical tradition. The participating artists of the Salon who

<sup>409</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>410</sup> For a brief account of Carolus-Duran, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900*, exhibition catalogue (Cleveland, 1980), pp. 279-280.

<sup>411</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', pp. 30-31.

drew Xu Beihong's attention were all academicians of the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institute of France, who were listed in Xu Beihong's 1922 article, *Zhi Chenguang meishuhui* (致晨光美術會, 'To the Dawn Society of Fine Arts').<sup>412</sup> Xu Beihong regarded them as among the best artists in the contemporary art world of France. Because the aforementioned experiences were recorded in Xu Beihong's autobiography, which was published in 1930, when he had become a spokesman for Western realism in the art world of China, his memoirs may be in part shaped by his later training in the French art academy, and by the stance he took. Nonetheless, the museums and exhibitions he visited to a certain degree revealed his penchant for the classical strand of Western art from the beginning of his studies in Paris. Xu Beihong's enthusiasm for art was also recorded in Jiang Biwei's memoirs. She recalled that Xu Beihong spend most of his time in visiting museums, while she had to study French hard during the first six months of their arrival.<sup>413</sup>

Xu Beihong first enrolled at the Académie Julian, the most popular private academy preparing artists for the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>414</sup> After two months, he sat the entrance examinations for the École des Beaux-Arts, and was accepted into the studio of Flameng (Fig. 87). Lucien Simon (1861-1945) succeeded to Flameng's position after he died in 1923.<sup>415</sup> Xu Beihong once provided an account of the studios at the École.<sup>416</sup> New students did not have to pay any tuition fees, and were only obliged to pay for refreshment for the whole studio

<sup>412</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 47-52 (pp. P. 49).

<sup>413</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 37.

<sup>414</sup> John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1988), pp. 11-16.

<sup>415</sup> Chou Fangmei and Wu Fangcheng 吳方正, '1920 ji 30 niandai Zhongguo huajia fu Bali xihua hou dui Shanghai yitan de yingxiang' 一九二〇及三〇年代中國畫家赴巴黎習畫後對上海藝壇的影響, 'The Influence of Returned Chinese Painters from Paris upon the Art Arena of Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s', in *Quyue yu wangluo*, pp. 629-668 (p. 638).

<sup>416</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', p. 51.

when they first arrived. They were also obliged to tidy the studio. In addition, the academicians who taught at the École des Beaux-Arts drew Xu Beihong's high praise for their possession of authentic knowledge of art. Xu Beihong's adoration for the École de Beaux-Arts was in opposition to Lin Fengmian's. In Lin's opinion, it was ridiculous to ask the newcomers to buy the whole class drinks and to tidy the studio. Besides, Lin Fengmian also complained that newcomers were often bullied, and compared this insulting treatment to that in prison. The assistant tutor, who was in charge of the daily practicalities of studio life, in Lin Fengmian's eyes was like the warden. Lin Fengmian did not enjoy the atmosphere at the studios of the École des Beaux-Arts, and thus he preferred visiting museums rather than going to the studio of Cormon.<sup>417</sup> Lin Fengmian's description of Cormon's studio reinforces John Milner's study of Cormon's private atelier in the late nineteenth century.<sup>418</sup> In Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian's accounts, the studios of the École des Beaux-Arts in the early twentieth century remained largely the same as they had been in the nineteenth century.<sup>419</sup> It seems that the French academic teaching system of the nineteenth century changed little and continued into the next century.<sup>420</sup> Lin Fengmian and Xu Beihong shared some similar experiences. For example, they both went to study at the École des Beaux-Arts and then were appointed heads of leading art departments and academies in the 1920s after they returned to China. Although they both studied at the French academy, they later developed different personal

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<sup>417</sup> Lin Fengmian enrolled in Fernand Cormon's studio at École des Beaux-Arts. Wan Qingli, 'Lin Fengmian yu tade Faguo laoshi Feiernande Keluomeng (Fernand-Anne Piestre Cormon, 1845-1924)' 林風眠與他的法國老師費爾南德·柯羅蒙 (Fernand-Anne Piestre Cormon, 1845-1924), 'Lin Fengmian and His French Teacher Fernand-Anne Piestre Cormon, 1845-1924', in Wan, *Wan Qingli meishu wenji*, pp. 203-211 (pp. 207-208).

<sup>418</sup> Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, pp. 20-25.

<sup>419</sup> Jacques Lethève, *Daily Life of French Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Hilary E. Paddon (London, 1972), pp. 28-29.

<sup>420</sup> Carl Goldstein, *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers* (Cambridge and New York, 1996), p. 61.



painting styles. Lin Fengmian assimilated the latest trends of the Western art of his day, such as Expressionism and Fauvism, while Xu Beihong became loyal to the Western classical tradition and Realism (Figs 88-89).<sup>421</sup> Scholars of modern Chinese art have often compared them to reveal the diversity of the art world of modern China, and on the basis of this comparison, Xu Beihong is often criticised as a conservative.<sup>422</sup>

In Xu Beihong's account, students at the École des Beaux-Arts were asked to draw from the plaster casts first, and then from the antique and from live models. These practical courses were joined by theoretical ones, such as anatomy, perspective, art history, aesthetics and history of antiquities.<sup>423</sup> Xu Beihong was particularly fond of the anatomy course. He praised the teacher of the course, Paul Richer (1849-1933, professor at the École des Beaux-Arts from 1903 to 1933), as the best all over the world in this discipline.<sup>424</sup> Xu Beihong's results seem to have been the best among the contemporary Chinese students who pursued art studies in Paris. He was placed fourteenth in the first year and sixth in the second year of the annual examination of the École.<sup>425</sup> According to Jiang Biwei's memoirs, Xu Beihong was the only one among the Chinese students, who also studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, to pass both examinations in theories and techniques.<sup>426</sup> Xu Beihong's knowledge of Western art theories later made him an eloquent proponent of French academic art and realism in the

<sup>421</sup> For an account of Lin Fengmian, see Hans van der Meyden, 'Submerged in a Melting-Pot of International Art: Chinese Painters and the School of Paris 1920-1950', in Rita Y.C. Chang ed., *Zhongguo – Bali: Zaoqi lüFa huajia huiguzhan* 中國 – 巴黎：早期旅法畫家回顧展, 'China – Paris: Seven Chinese Painters Who Studied in France, 1918-1960' (Taipei, 1988), pp. 28-43. Man Yee Sandy Ng, *Lin Fengmian (1900-1991): Figure Painting and Hybrid Modernity in Twentieth Century Chinese Art*, unpublished Dphil dissertation (University of London, 2005).

<sup>422</sup> For example, Wang, 'In the Name of the Real'.

<sup>423</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', pp. 48-51. On the curriculum of the French academies, see Lethève, *Daily Life of French Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>424</sup> On Paul Richer, see Anthea Callen, 'The Body and Difference: Anatomy Training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, 20.1 (1997), pp. 23-60.

<sup>425</sup> *Shibao*, 5 March 1926.

<sup>426</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 38.

discursive space of China's art world. Xu Beihong's results demonstrated his diligence. Jiang Biwei recalled that Xu Beihong often painted too hard to eat and sleep.<sup>427</sup> Xu Beihong's diligence drew attention from a journalist of the *Shibao*, Wang Ye (萬葉), who ran into Xu Beihong in Paris one evening. He praised the fact that Xu Beihong was too preoccupied with his art studies to be distracted by the pleasures of Paris.<sup>428</sup> Xu Beihong also recorded his studious attitude in one of his drawings, saying that he did not have time for lunch for two weeks when he sat the examinations in the spring of 1921 (Fig. 90). Diligence became a virtue that Xu Beihong was proud of, as well as a standard by which to measure an artist's accomplishments. Xu Beihong took his straitened circumstances as an example to argue that 'unusual diligence' underlay an artist's talent.<sup>429</sup> Moreover, the French painter Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) and sculptor Pierre Puget (1622-1694) drew Xu Beihong's praise for their resolution to overcome the hardships that they encountered in their art studies.<sup>430</sup>

Financial hardship was common among the Chinese students in Paris. Pang Xunqin (龐薰堃, 1906-1985) only had bread for Christmas. To distract his suffering from hunger, he thus kept painting from morning to midnight.<sup>431</sup> Chang Yu, who was from a well-to-do family, also encountered the hardship of poverty. He once could not fulfil a commitment because he did not have money to buy the required materials.<sup>432</sup> Xu Zhimo's short fiction, *Rouyan de Bali* (肉艷的巴黎, 'Sensual Paris'), may provide a glimpse into the life of Chinese students

<sup>427</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 38.

<sup>428</sup> *Shibao*, 5 March 1926.

<sup>429</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', p. 48. Xu Beihong, 'Beihong sumiaoji zixu' 《悲鴻素描集》自序, 'Author's Preface to *The Drawings of Beihong*', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>430</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', p. 50. Xu Beihong, 'Puludong' 普魯東, 'Prud'hon', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 55-68.

<sup>431</sup> Xiu Huajing, *Shanghai – Paris: Chinese Painters in France and China, 1919-1937*, unpublished Dphil dissertation (Oxford University, 2000), p. 95.

<sup>432</sup> Xiu, *Shanghai-Paris*, p. 97.

in Paris.<sup>433</sup> Xu Zhimo in the fiction told the story of a friend, who was studying art in Paris. He lived in an attic of an old building, where the interior was always dim. When Xu Zhimo visited his place, he showed Xu Zhimo his collection, including a drawing by Bonnat and one by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Moreover, he praised the ideal beauty in the nudes of Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), and criticised the ugliness in those of Matisse, Cézanne and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903).<sup>434</sup> This taste for art is reminiscent of that of Xu Beihong. The attic, where Xu Zhimo's friend lived, is also reminiscent of Xu Beihong's place in the Avenue de Friedland.<sup>435</sup> Nevertheless, the life style of Xu Zhimo's friend in the fiction was decadent. He was a night owl. His interminable comments on models in a sensual tone, which constituted the main theme of this fiction, suggested that the protagonist lived a depraved life, in opposition to Xu Beihong's studious life style. This fiction may be a synthesis of several art students' experiences.<sup>436</sup> Thus, it reflected various aspects of Chinese students' life in Paris in the 1920s, including that of Xu Beihong.

In addition to the studio of Flameng, Xu Beihong also learnt painting at the private studio of Dagnan-Bouveret on Sundays, till he returned to China in 1927.<sup>437</sup> Dagnan-Bouveret was a teacher of the École des Beaux-Arts and an academician of the Institute of France. Moreover, he was also a leading member of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, which was set up in 1890 under the

<sup>433</sup> Xu Zhimo studied at LSE and Cambridge in the UK. He went to Paris in 1924 and became a good friend of Xu Beihong and his wife. Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 147.

<sup>434</sup> Xu Zhimo, 'Rouyan de Bali', in Jiang Fucong 蔣復聰 and Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 eds, *Xu Zhimo Quanjì* 徐志摩全集, 'A Corpus of Xu Zhimo's Works' (Taipei, 1969), Vol. IV, pp. 77-90.

<sup>435</sup> Craig Clunas, 'Chinese Art and Chinese Artists in France', *Arts Asiatiques* 44 (1989), pp. 100-106 (p. 102).

<sup>436</sup> Some studies argue that the artist in Xu Zhimo's fiction is reminiscent of Chang Yu's life in Paris. Chen, *Chang Yu*, p. 28.

<sup>437</sup> On Dagnan-Bouveret's studio, see Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, p. 190.

leadership of Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891).<sup>438</sup> The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and The Société des Artistes Français dominated the jury of the Salon.<sup>439</sup> Hence, Dagnan-Bouveret was an influential figure in the official art world of France. Dagnan-Bouveret at the École des Beaux-Arts was the student of the well-established academician Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), who was known for his infusion of photographic veracity and a sense of contemporaneity into historical painting (Fig. 91).<sup>440</sup> Gérôme's meticulous painting style also demonstrated itself in his teaching which was known as demanding, incisive and thorough.<sup>441</sup> Under such training, Dagnan-Bouveret was skilled at making a painting realistically with painstaking care, a skill which won him a reputation as a Realist.<sup>442</sup> His genre paintings, which were rendered with photographic verisimilitude, made him a more successful painter of Naturalism.<sup>443</sup> *Horses at the Watering Trough*, which was executed in 1884, was a highly acclaimed painting in the 1885 Salon (Fig. 92). The closely observed and accurately transcribed details demonstrated how Dagnan-Bouveret heightened the illusion of reality with the aid of photographs (Fig. 93).<sup>444</sup> This horse painting may have exerted some influence on Xu Beihong's later creation of horse painting. Although the ink and expressive style in Xu Beihong's horse painting is very different from the realistic oil painting of *Horses at the Watering Trough*. Xu

<sup>438</sup> Constance Cain Hungerford, 'Meissonier and the Founding the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', *Art Journal*, 48.1 (1989), pp. 71-77.

<sup>439</sup> On the collapse of the official Salon system in the 1880s and the contesting situation of different forces and institutions in the art world of France in the late nineteenth century, see Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge and New York, 1994).

<sup>440</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London, 1990), pp. 23-33.

<sup>441</sup> Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, p. 18.

<sup>442</sup> For a comprehensive study of Dagnan-Bouveret, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Against the Modern: Dagnan-Bouveret and the Transformation of the Academic Tradition* (New York, 2002).

<sup>443</sup> Realism and Naturalism both required painstaking craftsmanship. The realistic effects made them synonymous. Many Realists were also Naturalists, such as Dagnan-Bouveret. On Naturalism, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: the Naturalist Impulse in European Art, 1860-1905* (London, 1992).

<sup>444</sup> Weisberg, *Against the Modern*, pp. 70-72.

Beihong's pencil drawings of horses demonstrated the importance of Western pictorial devices in the making of his ink horse paintings (Fig. 94). The photographic verisimilitude in Xu Beihong's early portrait paintings may also draw on his admiration for Dagnan-Bouveret's attainments. Dagnan-Bouveret turned to pursue in his painting a sense of transcendent spirituality in his later career.<sup>445</sup> The combination of Realism and Symbolism in Dagnan-Bouveret's later works was highly regarded by Xu Beihong as the best examples to represent the works of ideal beauty with realistic craftsmanship, which Xu Beihong expounded in the article, 'Beauty and Art in Painting'.<sup>446</sup>

In addition to studying art with the academicians at the academy and in studios, Xu Beihong's pastime was to visit museums and the antiquarian bookshops along the river Seine.<sup>447</sup> Moreover, he also sharpened his art skills by copying paintings in museums. Copying masterpieces in museums seemed to be a widespread practice for art students. Wang Yachen spent two years in Paris on copying the works of the masters, such as those of Titian (1485-1576), Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Rembrandt (1606-1669), Rubens, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), etc. During his sojourn in Paris, Wang Yachen copied a total of 32 paintings.<sup>448</sup> Jiang Biwei's account provides a glimpse into Xu Beihong's diligence in copying masterpieces. She recalled that Xu Beihong arranged an extra visit to the National Gallery in London to copy Velázquez's *The Toilet of Venus* (1647-1651), which took him ten days (Fig. 95), when he was mounting a Chinese painting exhibition in Paris in 1933.<sup>449</sup> Xu Beihong's copy of Raphael's *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1515-1516) appeared at Sotheby's auction of

<sup>445</sup> Weisberg, *Against the Modern*, pp. 105-118.

<sup>446</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Faguo yishu jinkuang', p. 72.

<sup>447</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 38.

<sup>448</sup> Xiu, *Shanghai - Paris*, p. 108.

<sup>449</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 82. On Chinese painting exhibitions held in Europe in the 1930s, see Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker *et al.* eds, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945* (München, 2004), pp. 27-44 & 112-126.

*Fine Modern Chinese Oil Paintings, Watercolors and Sculpture* in Taipei in October 1992 (Figs 96-97).<sup>450</sup> This painting is dated 1933 (*Gui you* 癸酉), meaning that Xu Beihong also copied Raphael's work at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Xu Beihong's industry and ability can be seen in his faithful copy of Raphael's painting.

Whether in his autobiography or other people's memoirs, Xu Beihong's image is always serious and studious. Nevertheless, his initiation into the Heavenly Dog Society (*Tiangouhui* 天狗會) revealed another side of Xu Beihong.<sup>451</sup> The name of the Heavenly Dog Society seemed to form an ironic response to the famous art society, the Heavenly Horse Society (*Tianmahui* 天馬會), which was founded in Shanghai in 1919. Its leading members included several influential figures in the Western art world of Shanghai, such as Liu Haisu, Wang Yachen, and Ding Song.<sup>452</sup> A picture in which Xu Beihong and his wife were photographed around 1923 reveals Xu Beihong's dandified appearance (Fig. 98). Xu Beihong was one of the principle members of the Heavenly Dog Society, along with Xie Shoukang (謝壽康, 1894-?), Shao Xunmei (邵洵美, 1906-1968), Zhang Daofan (張道藩, 1897-1968), Chang Yu, and Jiang Biwei.<sup>453</sup> Several members, such as Shao Xunmei and Chang Yu, often behaved in a relatively bohemian manner.<sup>454</sup> Jiang Biwei recalled how they often went to the cinemas and sat in the cafés several times a day. Xu Beihong later also attended the ateliers in Montparnasse, the centre of

<sup>450</sup> *Fine Modern Chinese Oil Paintings, Watercolors and Sculpture*, Sotheby's auction catalogue (Taipei: 18 October 1992).

<sup>451</sup> For a detailed account of the Heavenly Dog Society, see Jiang Biwei, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, pp. 42-43, 47 & 50.

<sup>452</sup> Liu Haisu, 'Tianmahui shi shenme' 天馬會究竟是什麼, 'What on earth is the Heavenly Horse Society?', in Zhu Jinlou 朱金樓 and Yuan Zhihuang 袁志煌 eds, *Liu Haisu yishu wenxuan* 劉海粟藝術文選, 'A Selection of Liu Haisu's Essays on Art' (Shanghai, 1987), pp. 66-68.

<sup>453</sup> Jiang, *Jiang Biwei huiyilu*, p. 47.

<sup>454</sup> On Shao Xunmei, see Lin Qi 林淇, *Haishang caizi Shao Xunmei zhuan* 海上才子邵洵美傳, 'A Biography of the Wit in Shanghai, Shao Xunmei' (Shanghai, 2002). On Chang Yu, see Chen Yanfeng 陳炎鋒, *Chang Yu* 常玉 (Taipei, 1995).

avant-garde art in Paris. It may be that he was influenced by Chang Yu, whose nude paintings represented a sensual atmosphere in the style of Matisse and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) (Fig. 99).<sup>455</sup> Chang Yu and Xu Beihong developed a close friendship when they were in Paris. Their friendship can be in part manifest in a paper sheet, of which one side is a drawing of lions and the other side an ink flower painting (Figs 100-101). The drawing of lions executed by Xu Beihong around 1922 represented a Western realistic style, while the flower painting made by Chang Yu in 1921 demonstrated a literati taste for traditional Chinese painting. These two works on a sheet's two sides illustrated in part the dichotomy of realism and idealism in modern Chinese painting, in the face of the call for pro-Western reforms in China's art world in the twentieth century. Moreover, this sheet has also been used as a convincing manifestation of Xu Beihong's image as a conservative realist.<sup>456</sup> With a growing popular Western modernist perspective on modern Chinese painting in the related scholarship, Xu Beihong has been gradually shaped as a conservative proponent of Western Realism, which was outdated in the West in the twentieth century.<sup>457</sup> Nonetheless, Xu Beihong's photographs, friends, and the contemporary Chinese press indicated that he was regarded as a modern painter at that time. When Xu Beihong returned to China in 1927, a report said that Xu Beihong, with his long hair and detached languid manners, was a bohemian artist of the Latin Quarter of Paris.<sup>458</sup> A drawing of Shao Xunmei done by Xu Beihong may exemplify the diversity of a modern Chinese artist (Fig. 102). The realistic rendering of Shao Xunmei demonstrated Xu Beihong's solid foundation in a Western academic training. Nonetheless, the

<sup>455</sup> Leslie Jones, 'San Yu: Chinese Painter of Montparnasse', *Res*, 35 (1999), pp. 224-239.

<sup>456</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency'.

<sup>457</sup> For example, the latest essays include Wang, 'In the Name of the Real'; Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency'. For a study on the formulation of Modernism, see Jonathan Harris, *Writing Back to Modern Art: After Greenberg, Fried, and Clark* (New York, 2005).

<sup>458</sup> van der Meyden, 'Submerged in a Melting-Pot of International Art', p.40

painstaking style of this drawing seemed contradictory to Shao Xunmei's image, as a writer well known for the decadent style in his writings and life. Xu Beihong and Shao Xunmei's friendship remained after Xu Beihong became an advocate of realism, who severely criticised modernist art.<sup>459</sup> Xu Beihong was a studious student in Paris and acquired attainments in painstaking realism through academic training. At the same time, he was also a young and ambitious Chinese painter, who was fond of the dashing side of Paris. His skill in academic realism rapidly made him the proponent of Western realism in the competitive art field in China; meanwhile the diversity in his art and disposition was gradually submerged in the shaping of his image as a realist hero.

Drawing may be the best exemplification of Xu Beihong's academic training in Paris. During his sojourn in Europe, Xu Beihong was productive. He made a considerable number of drawings, as well as oil figure paintings, and drafts of history paintings. Xu Beihong's drawings on the one hand demonstrated that he was a studious student; on the other hand, they revealed the demanding and strict training system at the École de Beaux-Arts. The life at the École consisted of endless contests up to that for the Prix de Rome.<sup>460</sup> The competition started from the beginning. Aspirants to be official students of the École had to take examinations annually, and the results would affect the allocation of seats in the drawing classes.<sup>461</sup> For Xu Beihong, painstakingly realistic rendering was the way to embody diligence and thus was the visual equivalent of moral integrity. Xu Beihong's point of view responded to the influential French Neoclassical painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's (1780-1867) dictum that

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<sup>459</sup> When Xu Beihong and Jiang Biwei's marriage appeared serious problems in 1930, Xu Beihong left home and stayed at Shao Xunmei's place. Lin, *Haishang caizi Shao Xunmei zhuan*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>460</sup> On Prix de Rome, see Lethève, *Daily Life of French Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>461</sup> Callen, 'The Body and Difference', pp. 31-32.



drawing was the probity of art. The dictum had been set as the guide in academic teaching.<sup>462</sup>

Comparing the drawings that Xu Beihong had done in 1921 and 1922 with those from 1924, we see that Xu Beihong made great progress in his painting attainments (Figs 103-106). The drawings of 1921 and 1922 are studies of male bodies. The layers of light and shade are not rich enough to represent the smooth texture of skin. It seems that Xu Beihong strived to take care of each part of the bodies and thus was unable to portray the live models as a whole. His skills were not mature at that time. Nevertheless, Xu Beihong seemed to overcome the difficulties and was able to represent anatomically precise human bodies in his works of 1924. The exquisite and thorough modelling with subtle gradations of light and shade vividly represents the texture of male skin at different ages. Even in a drawing done with a much more rough touch, the portrayed male nude still remains anatomically precise (Fig. 107). In this male figure drawing, Xu Beihong showed more confidence. It seems that he was able to represent a human body precisely only with bold use of light and shade. It showed that Xu Beihong's drawing attainments had allowed him to draw from life with a more personal and even playful touch.

Comparing the aforementioned drawings with Xu Beihong's early portrait paintings, in which the figure bodies are thin and schematic without a hint of volume, we see that Xu Beihong benefited greatly from the knowledge of anatomy that he learnt from the related courses at the École. As mentioned above, the anatomy class at the École and the teacher Paul Richer drew high praise from Xu Beihong. Richer was interested in studying the mechanics of physical

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<sup>462</sup> Harrison C. and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago and London, 1993), p. 7.

movements.<sup>463</sup> In a series of photographs that he took of a male model in various positions, some of the poses seemingly imitated classical sculptures (Fig. 108). For example, the one in the third line, the second from the right, is posed in imitation of Michelangelo's famous statue *David*. Richer also took a few series of female bodies in various positions (Figs 109-110). Some of these poses are also seen in Xu Beihong's drawings, such as the lying pose (Fig. 111) and the standing pose in the second row, the second from the left (Fig. 112). Xu Beihong must have drawn from the models posed in the life class, instead of from those taken in the photographs. However, these pictures reflected the way in which anatomy helped to improve a student's drawing skills.

Xu Beihong's industry is also demonstrated in his great patience in repeatedly drawing from the same live model from various angles (Figs 113-115). The tones of light and shade and the finished degree in the three drawings are very similar, showing Xu Beihong's meticulous attitude towards studying art. The Russian-born American sculptor Saul Baizerman (1899-1957) described the life class that he took at the Beaux-Arts Institution of Design, saying that "We usually had four weeks with the same model and the same pose".<sup>464</sup> Although it was a description of the life class in early twentieth-century New York, it can provide us with a glimpse into the life class at the contemporaneous École de Beaux-Arts in Paris. The same pose was a challenge for both models and students. It was boring and painful, as Baizerman complained, to manage to keep the momentum to draw from the same live model from different angles. This demanding practice, which revealed the high standard of perfection at the École, seemed to be embodied in Xu Beihong's drawings.

The thorough rendering and highly finished touch represent idealised beauty

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<sup>463</sup> Callen, 'The Body and Difference', pp. 45-52.

<sup>464</sup> Carl Goldstein, *Teaching Art*, p. 180.

in the portrayed figures of Xu Beihong's drawings. The idealised beauty of the human form was regarded by the academies as the embodiment of man's moral and spiritual value.<sup>465</sup> The human body, which served as the highest form of art, had been central to the doctrines of academic art since the seventeenth century when the Academy was established.<sup>466</sup> Nonetheless, perfect beauty did not simply lie in human figures, but in the idealised form, which could be found in the classical painting and sculpture. Therefore, in an academic training, drawing from a live model was as important as drawing from the antique. The thoroughly realistic skills were the best means to crystallise this beauty, by making a human figure as idealised and smooth as a classical statue of marble. Xu Beihong's drawing of a female nude with the texture of a sculpture can demonstrate such academic aesthetics (Fig. 116). The drawing depicts a woman taking a nap. The rigid lines of her face express the hard touch of stone; and the exquisite smoothness of her skin is also suggestive of marble; but the belly represents the soft texture of the human body. Xu Beihong's highly finished touch makes it harder to tell whether the portrayed figure is a human body or a statue.

Xu Beihong's drawings demonstrate his solid foundation in an academic training. They rapidly won Xu Beihong a reputation as an accomplished Westernised Chinese painter. Moreover, Xu Beihong argued that the painstaking and realistic rendering in academic art, which represented human morality, could serve as the remedy for the decadence in present China.<sup>467</sup> The academic aesthetics, which regarded the idealised human figure executed with realistic craftsmanship as the embodiment of spirituality and morality, may provide an answer to Xu Beihong's lifelong loyalty to realism and academic art, because it

<sup>465</sup> Callen, *The Body and Difference*, p. 23.

<sup>466</sup> White, *Canvases and Careers*, p. 6.

<sup>467</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Angeer de sumiao' 安格爾的素描, 'Drawings of Ingres', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 161-162 (p. 161).

could serve as the model for realistic Chinese portraiture to represent the spiritual resonance of literati painting, and thus raise their position in the Chinese painting realm. This elevation of the cultural power of Chinese professional painting would help Xu Beihong to increase his cultural capital and significance in China's art world.

## 4.2 Xu Beihong's Reading of Western Realism during 1921-1926

After leaving for Europe from Shanghai in March 1919, Xu Beihong did not published any essay on art until 1921 when the article, 'To the Dawn Society of Fine Arts', was published in the first issue of *Chenguang* (晨光) magazine. In 1925, Xu Beihong wrote prefaces for two catalogues: *Beihong huiji xu* (《悲鴻繪集》序, 'Preface to A Collection of Beihong's Paintings'), and 'Prud'hon'. In 1926, the press published several speeches give by Xu Beihong when he returned to China for a few months to look for financial support. These speeches have been repeatedly published, and provide an encapsulation of Xu Beihong's art studies in Europe from 1919 to 1926, as well as of his perception of Western realism.<sup>468</sup> The speeches of 1926, which are in wide circulation, are as follows: 'Author's Preface to *The Drawings of Beihong*', 'The Current Situation in French Art', *Xueshu yanjiu zhi tanhua* (學術研究之談話, 'A Talk on Academic Research'), *Meishu zhi qiyuan jiqi zhendi – Zai Shanghai Xinwen xuehui jiangyanci* (美術之起源及其真諦 – 在上海新聞學會講演辭, 'The Origin and Essence of Art – A Speech Given to the Shanghai Journalism Society'), 'The Anatomy of Beauty – A Speech Given to the Shanghai Kailuo Company'), *Yu Shibao jizhe tan yishu* (與《時報》記者談藝術, 'Conversation on Art with a Journalist of the *Shibao*'), *Zai Zhonghua yishu daxue jiangyanci* (在中華藝術大學講演辭, 'A Speech Given at the Chinese University of Art'), and *Gujin Zhongwai yishulun – Zai Datong daxue jiangyanci* (古今中外藝術論 – 在大同大學講演辭, 'On Ancient and Modern, Chinese and Western Art – A Speech Given at Datong University').<sup>469</sup> Xu Beihong mentioned realism several times in these speeches. Nonetheless, the term realism for Xu Beihong seemingly referred

<sup>468</sup> Xu Beihong moved to Berlin for about one and half years from July 1921, due to financial pressure. Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 26-29.

<sup>469</sup> These speeches are collected in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 47-103.

to a set of meanings. His reading of Western realism was varied rather than fixed. Sometimes, Xu Beihong referred Realism to a specific painting school of nineteenth century France. More often, Xu Beihong referred realism to a kind of art practice.

Xu Beihong first referred to Realism as a specific painting school in the article, 'To the Dawn Society of Fine Arts'. He argued:

Back in the nineteenth century, Classicism enjoyed its heyday and was succeeded by Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism and so forth. A wide variety of painting schools have been dominant and flourishing in the French art arena one after another since then. I would like to list the best-known living artists as follows. However, I will not include the artists of Cubism and German Expressionism, who do not have great significance.

溯自十九世紀以還，古典派已成過去之物。小說派、寫實派、印象派等繼之，縱橫一時，騰奇燦妙。茲舉其最著藝人建在者如下：至新出之 Cubists 及德國之 Expressionists 無足稱者，不著。<sup>470</sup>

Following this brief account of modern French art, Xu Beihong gave a list of artists, whom he regarded as among the best in the world of modern art in France. These artists included Bonnat, Dagnan-Bouveret, Flameng, Cormon, L.P. Laurens, L'Hermitte, Besnard and so forth. He marked Dagnan-Bouveret and L'Hermitte as Realists. Both of them were famous for their realistic depiction of the themes of peasants and common people, done with a dignified touch (Fig. 117).<sup>471</sup> Here, Realism referred *Xiешipai* to the painting school, which was led by French Realists in the nineteenth century, as the art historian Linda Nochlin defined it: "Realism, as an historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature, attained its most coherent and consistent formulation in France, with echoes, parallels and variants elsewhere on the Continent, in England and in the

<sup>470</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', p. 49.

<sup>471</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, p. 17.

United States. Preceded by Romanticism and followed by what is now generally termed Symbolism, it was the dominant movement from about 1840 until 1870-1880".<sup>472</sup>

Xu Beihong pointed out that the aforementioned artists were academicians of the Institute of France. The academicians were often also the teachers of the École des Beaux-Arts. Dagnan-Bouveret, Flameng and Cormon were teachers of Xu Beihong.<sup>473</sup> Besnard became acquainted with Xu Beihong through Dagnan-Bouveret.<sup>474</sup> He was marked as an Impressionist by Xu Beihong (Fig. 118). In addition to the academicians, Xu Beihong also listed some artists who were among the best in his eyes, such as Georges Antoine Rochegrosse (1859-1938), Lucien Simon, and Clémentine-Hélène Dufau (1869-1937) (Fig. 119).<sup>475</sup> Although they were not academicians, they were members of the Société des Artistes Français, the association of French painters and sculptors which was set up in 1881. It took charge of the official Salon from 1880 and thus represented official taste.<sup>476</sup> The aforementioned artists often appeared in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, the journal believed to be representative of academic taste. For example, an article on Dufau was published in the October/November 1917 issue of *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.<sup>477</sup> An article on Prud'hon's retrospective exhibition at the Petit-Palais was published in the May 1922 issue.<sup>478</sup> Xu Beihong published an article on Prud'hon in 1925 and in it quoted Etienne Bricon's praise for Prud'hon. Bricon was the editor writer of *Gazette des*

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<sup>472</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, p. 13.

<sup>473</sup> Cormon once taught Xu Beihong for a while as a supply teacher at the École. Wan Qingli, 'Lin Fengmian yu tade Faguo laoshi Feiernande Keluomeng (Fernand-Anne Piestre Cormon, 1845-1924)', pp. 210-211.

<sup>474</sup> Xiu, *Shanghai-Paris*, p. 115.

<sup>475</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Chenguang meishuhui', p. 49.

<sup>476</sup> Christopher Green, *Art in France 1900-1940* (New Haven and London, 2000), pp. 39-40.

<sup>477</sup> Chou and Wu, '1920 ji 30 niandai Zhongguo huajia fu Bali xihua hou dui Shanghai yitan de yingxiang' pp. 636-637.

<sup>478</sup> Raymond Bouyer, 'Le Génie de Prud'hon: A L'Exposition du Petit-Palais', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 727 (1922), pp. 261-274.

*Beaux-Arts*.<sup>479</sup> Xu Beihong's knowledge of the French art arena was apparently through an academic lens. He was aware of the latest Western art trends, but he still referred to modern art as the painting schools of the nineteenth century. From a modernist perspective, Xu Beihong was conservative. His view of Western art was that of painters who grew up in the nineteenth century, such as his teachers at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, rather than those of an avant-garde.

In the article, 'Conversation on Art with a Journalist of the *Shibao*', Xu Beihong also referred to Realism as the most significant nineteenth century French painting school when he was elaborating the development of Western painting. He argued:

Later on, [Gustave] Courbet (1819-1877) and [Jean-François] Millet (1814-1875) promoted Realism, since they argued that all kinds of subjects should be allowed to be depicted in painting. What really mattered was whether or not a painter was able to study the subject-matter thoroughly. Afterwards, [Jules] Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) established Impressionism, as he was unsatisfied with the ignorance of landscape subject matter in the paintings of the aforementioned artists. [The Impressionists] thought that beauty lay in the spirit of the depicted object. They complained that painstaking emulation and detailed depiction could only gain the form but not the spirit of the object. Therefore, they intended to represent the first impression of the project portrayed in order to [capture the spirit of the portrayed], something which was missing in the precedent schools. As a consequence, Impressionism became popular. The able Impressionists obtained better artistic accomplishments than their predecessors. Nonetheless, those who were incapable but claimed to be Impressionists, without profound and painstaking techniques, led to the regression of painting craftsmanship. ... The Impressionists were not content with perfecting the depiction of an object's form. Instead, they aspired to infuse the depicted object with spirit. An art work would not be admirable without a

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<sup>479</sup> Chou and Wu, '1920 ji 30 niandai Zhongguo huajia fu Bali xihua hou dui Shanghai yitan de yingxiang' pp. 637-638.



spirit in it. The Impressionists actually set strict standards for their art.

其後庫爾貝，米勒又以為無物不足以入畫，徒向能善究否耳，乃倡寫實主義。勒班習又覺前此畫人所做不重景色，乃建外光派，印象派。覺美在氣韻，謂精摹曲寫，每得其形而失其神，乃欲與人見物時最初之一印象，而補歷來各派之不足。是說興，於是賢者過之，不肖者乃無勇為精到堅強之工，於是藝事日益衰。...夫印象派且不滿足於專攻於物體之形，必也與之以魂。所謂氣韻者，方稱美妙，其嚴格如此。<sup>480</sup>

Xu Beihong referred to Courbet and Millet as Realists, touching on the democratic connotations and painstaking craftsmanship of Realism.<sup>481</sup> In today's light, it seems wrong for Xu Beihong to regard Bastien-Lepage as the founder of Impressionism. Xu Beihong's view revealed that he perceived Impressionism from the angle of Naturalism, a short-lived art movement beginning in the late 1870s and subsiding in the early 1890s.<sup>482</sup> Naturalism has been ignored in the scholarship on nineteenth century French painting, because it shared the realistic illusion of Realism and the light effects of Impressionism, whose triumph completely overpowered other contemporary art schools. Impressionism and Naturalism displayed the two forms of artistic expression in response to the development of science in the nineteenth century. Both painting schools aimed to scientifically seek the reality of existence in portrayed objects.<sup>483</sup> Naturalism represented this scientific attitude in photographic descriptiveness, while Impressionism situated it in the fleeting glimpse of light. Émile Zola (1840-1902) argued that the Impressionists could be called the counterparts of literary Naturalists, and were the bolder Realists.<sup>484</sup> The scientific approach towards studying nature was shared by both Naturalism and Impressionism. Nevertheless,

<sup>480</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Yu Shibao jizhe tan yishu', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 85-91 (pp. 86-87).

<sup>481</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, pp. 111-124.

<sup>482</sup> Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism*, p. 7.

<sup>483</sup> Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism*, p. 14.

<sup>484</sup> Roland N. Stromberg ed., *Realism, Naturalism and Symbolism: Modes of Thought and Expression in Europe, 1848-1914* (London and Melbourne, 1968), pp. 154-155.

while Impressionists chose to represent nature in the way of bold realism, the Naturalists displayed in their works a still more painstaking realism than the Realists themselves. The painstaking Naturalism was popular among academic painters, whereas the expressive Impressionism found acceptance among the rebellious painters outside the mainstream. Therefore, while Impressionism marked a break with the Western tradition and was in full swing as a school of modernism into the twentieth century, Naturalism's photographic illusion made it a variation of Realism and thus was forsaken when the non-figurative tendency came to dominate the Western art world at the turn of the century.

The *plein-air* (open-air) issue was another concern of both Naturalism and Impressionism. It made contributions to some distinctive features of Impressionism, such as the use of out-of-doors scenery, bright colours and broken brushwork.<sup>485</sup> The use of *plein-air* was raised as an issue as a result of the Impressionists' scientific enquiry about the essence of reality.<sup>486</sup> It brought challenges to the finished touch of traditional painting as the way of representing reality.<sup>487</sup> An interest in *plein-air* subject matter also mounted among academic painters, such as Bastien-Lepage and Dagnan-Bouveret. Bastien-Lepage's *Potato Gatherers* was a highly acclaimed painting in the 1879 Salon (Fig. 120). The photographic illusion and *plein-air* effects made the painting the epitome of Naturalism, and made Bastien-Lepage a representative of Naturalism. Zola highly regarded Bastien-Lepage as the heir to Courbet and Millet. Moreover, he praised Bastien-Lepage for creating an Impressionist tonality in his painting, while maintaining his personal temperament.<sup>488</sup> This making of Naturalistic

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<sup>485</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, p. 137.

<sup>486</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, pp. 137-150

<sup>487</sup> Richard R. Brettell, *Impression: Painting Quickly in France 1860-1890* (New Haven and London, 2001).

<sup>488</sup> Weisberg, *Against the Modern*, p.62.

painting was also used in Dagnan-Bouveret's *Horses at the Watering Trough* (Fig. 92).

In the sentence quoted above from Xu Beihong's article, it appears that Xu Beihong preferred Impressionism to Realism. Nonetheless, the emphasis on both spirit and craftsmanship reveals that Xu Beihong perceived Impressionism in the light of academic Naturalism rather than of modernism. Accordingly, Xu Beihong regarded Bastien-Lepage as an Impressionist. Xu Beihong's perception of Impressionism as having an emphasis on painstaking realism made him exclude those painters, who displayed a non-figurative disposition, such as Manet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), from the category of authentic Impressionists.<sup>489</sup> Xu Beihong's point of view demonstrated his academic stance, which was relatively conservative in the early twentieth century when modernist art gained its apogee.

In the two aforementioned articles, in which Xu Beihong perceived Realism as a specific painting school, he did not reveal an obvious preference for Realism. What he was concerned with more was the realistic techniques, which he believed to be the indispensable component of any painting school. In the article, 'Conversation on Art with a Journalist of the *Shibao*', after giving an account of Western art schools and describing Bastien-Lepage as an Impressionist as quoted above, Xu Beihong argued:

Art has two styles, one is the idealistic and the other is the realistic. Although no known artist in the world paints in an absolutely realistic manner, idealistic artists do not seem capable of crystallising their ideas by means of nonexistent scenes or objects. Consequently, the sculpture created by the most accomplished realist artist, such as Rodin, looks as if it has a soul. In comparison, every detail in the works of an idealistic artist, such as [Pierre] Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), follows the

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<sup>489</sup> Xu, 'Yu Shibao jizhe tan yishu', p. 87.

form of being. Great artists do not subscribe themselves to any school, so that they are able to depict all kinds of things at their will. It is not these artists, but people in a later generation who feel the need to categorise their works. Take Phidias, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Titian and Raphael for example; we cannot point out which school each of them is actually under. As regards Rembrandt and Velázquez, their painting cannot be categorised under the school of Realism because one is Dutch and the other is Spanish. All of them base their accomplishments on realistic practices. With their knowledge growing, techniques developing and aspirations broadening, then they will be able to demonstrate in their work the ideal beauty, through the elegant form and subtle colour of the subjects they depict, because such ideal beauty can only be embodied by an artist with great breadth of mind and with lofty morality. If the embodiment of the ideal beauty is based on drawing from life, it will be called a realistic work; otherwise it will be considered an idealistic work if the ideal beauty is crystallised in a more sensational touch. Nevertheless, I still insist that only those who possess masterly realistic skills are capable of creating an idealistic work.

藝分兩大派，曰寫意，曰寫實。世界固無絕對寫實之藝人，而寫意者亦不能表其寄託於人所未見之景物上，故寫實之至人如羅丹，其所造人如有魂。善寫意者如夏凡，其一切形態俱含神理。且藝人之至者，自不立派，故能上天下地，成其偉大，後人始以何派歸之耳。Phidias，不知其為何派也，Michel-Ange、Vinci、Titian、Raphael，不知其為何派也，Rembrandt 荷蘭人，Velázquez 西班牙人，不能以寫實派括之也。彼惟以寫實為方法，其智能日啓，藝日新，願日宏，志日大，沛然浩然，傾其寥廓之胸襟，立峻極之至德，其象其色，高貴華妙，乃為人意想中之美。其近於物者，謂之寫實，入於情者，謂之寫意，惟藝之至者方能寫意，未易言也。<sup>490</sup>

In this paragraph, realism refers to a set of meanings, including a style, an art practice and a painting school. In the sentence in which Rembrandt and Velázquez are excluded from the category of Realists, Realism there refers to the nineteenth century painting school. In other places, realism means either an art

<sup>490</sup> Xu, 'Yu Shibao jizhe tan yishu', p. 88.

practice or a style based on this practice. For Xu Beihong, realism is the only precondition for every style of art. Nonetheless, a superb artwork has to represent something more than craftsmanship. Xu Beihong cited Rodin's sculpture to exemplify what he meant as a painstakingly realistic work (Fig. 121).<sup>491</sup> Rodin was held in high esteem in Xu Beihong's writings. In the article, *Yiyuan jianshe jihua* (藝院建設計劃, 'A Development Plan for Art Academies'), Xu Beihong argued that Rodin's achievements can bear comparison with those of Phidias and Michelangelo. He gave a long list of Rodin's works which he suggested that Chinese government should collect.<sup>492</sup> On the other hand, for Xu Beihong, the works of Puvis de Chavannes were the best examples to embody his notion of idealism. The flat and painterly features of Puvis de Chavannes's paintings drew wide admiration from both conservative and avant-garde camps in the art world of his day. The French painter and writer Maurice Denis remarked that Puvis de Chavannes's *The Poor Fisherman*, dated 1881, revealed the features of modernism in its 'flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain order' (Fig. 122).<sup>493</sup> Although Puvis de Chavannes represented a modernist tendency, the painterly form in his painting was considered as a way to rejuvenate French tradition rather than marking a break with it. Hence, Puvis de Chavannes's painting was also held in high esteem in the official art world. His murals decorated public buildings throughout France.<sup>494</sup>

Rodin and Puvis de Chavannes represented a modernist disposition in their works, and at the same time maintained some association with tradition. It was this painstaking craftsmanship that Xu Beihong was willing to greatly admire,

<sup>491</sup> On Rodin, see Catherine Lampert *et al.* eds, *Rodin*, exhibition catalogue (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006-2007).

<sup>492</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Yiyuan jianshe jihua', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 105-114 (pp. 107-111).

<sup>493</sup> Jennifer L. Shaw, *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France* (New Haven and London, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>494</sup> Shaw, *Dream States*, pp. 1-8.

along with the symbolic turn in their works. The paragraph quoted above indicated that Xu Beihong was actually more concerned with realism as a practice, one which underlay all kinds of paintings. The painting school known as Realism did not occupy the highest rung in the ladder of Xu Beihong's aesthetics. Instead, the Naturalist Impressionism which revealed the aspiration to go beyond pure mechanical mimesis was, in Xu Beihong's terms, more indicative of great art. What drew Xu Beihong's high praise was any painting, which represented both personal disposition and realistic techniques. Accordingly, the classical canon of Western art, and the present realistic artists who represented the modernist tendency in their works, seemingly drew more attention from Xu Beihong than works of painstaking Realism and Naturalism.

Xu Beihong's perception of realism in the aforementioned paragraph is also seen in another article, 'The Current Situation in French Art', in which he argued:

In my opinion, there are a variety of painting schools in the world, such as Classicism, Romanticism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism. Leaving aside their nuances for the moment, they can be roughly categorised into two types, one is the realistic and the other is the idealistic. The feature of each painting school would definitely belong to either one or the other. The greatness of Dagnan-Bouveret's artistic accomplishment lies in the gradual transformation of his painting style from the realistic to the idealistic. At the early phase, Dagnan-Bouveret started to paint in the realistic manner. Later on, when his skills became increasingly accomplished, and his knowledge of arts more comprehensive, his painting then gradually featured idealistic expression. Generally speaking, the transcendent idea is the most difficult thing to crystallise in painting. Nevertheless, Dagnan-Bouveret's idealistic works illustrate it best.

予謂世界畫品，別類繁多，若古典主義，若浪漫主義，若印象派，若後期印象派，若立體派，若未來派，雜目細節，姑置弗

論，數其大端，終不外乎寫意、寫實兩類，不屬於甲者，必屬於乙。達仰先生之偉大，正以其少年時從寫實派入手，厥後造詣日深，更于藝事融會貫通，由漸而化為寫意派，「大凡玄虛之理想最難實現，而先生寫意之作，最能實現其理想。」<sup>495</sup>

This paragraph reveals that Xu Beihong was familiar with the latest trends of Western art, in opposition to the stereotype that he was blind to all European painting after 1880, as the scholar Michael Sullivan has criticised him.<sup>496</sup> He ignored them in favour of the realism of painstaking craftsmanship. Nonetheless, the realistic works that were rendered in a very thorough and painstaking manner were not what he regarded as the best. Instead, what Xu Beihong appreciated was that kind of painting which was rooted in realism but was able to represent something spiritual beyond pure mimesis. In Xu Beihong's opinions, Dagnan-Bouveret's later paintings were among the best examples.

Dagnan-Bouveret started his career as an academic Realist. His genre paintings in the style of Realism and Naturalism enjoyed great popularity and brought him to the apogee of his career. However, in the later phase of his career, he was among the increasing number of artists who turned their attention to a transcendent subject matter.<sup>497</sup> *Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus* of 1896-1897 exemplified this shift in Dagnan-Bouveret's art (Fig. 123). This painting was modelled on Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Nevertheless, the photographically realistic figures in *Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus* demonstrated that Dagnan-Bouveret still retained Naturalist practices in the making of religious painting. The two figures kneeling and praying in the far right side were Dagnan-Bouveret's wife and son (Fig. 124). Dagnan-Bouveret still had models pose for him when he made religious paintings. Moreover, the religious paintings represented some connection with the classical canon of

<sup>495</sup> Xu, 'Faguo yishu jinkuang', p. 72.

<sup>496</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 72.

<sup>497</sup> Weisberg, *Against the Modern*, pp. 105-137.

Renaissance art. For Xu Beihong, the best painting of the present day was exemplified in those works of Dagnan-Bouveret, Rodin and Puvis de Chavannes which combined painstaking realism, classical tradition and spiritual implications.

Dagnan-Bouveret, Rodin and Puvis de Chavannes were the leading members of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.<sup>498</sup> Its founder members also included Besnard, Eugène Carrière (1849-1906) and Henri Gervex (1852-1929). Besides, Gérôme, Bonnat and Bastien-Lepage were among its supporters.<sup>499</sup> These painters were often praised by Xu Beihong in his speeches and articles. The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts had seceded from the Société des Artistes Français. It quickly became the counterpart of the Société des Artistes Français and was also influential in the official art world of France. It held its own Salon, traditionally opening a fortnight later than the official Salon, and it accepted foreign members.<sup>500</sup> Moreover, it featured exhibitions for established international artists such as John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) and James Whistler (1834-1903), both of whom were also esteemed by Xu Beihong (Fig. 125).<sup>501</sup> Xu Beihong's admiration for the aforementioned painters demonstrated that he perceived the art world of France of his day through the lens of his teacher Dagnan-Bouveret.

The secession of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from the Société des Artistes Français resulted from the dispute over the issue of prizes. Meissonier refused to consider the possibility of removing privileges from the medal winners at the Exposition Universelle of 1889. He insisted that the medal

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<sup>498</sup> Hungerford, 'Meissonier and the Founding the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts'.

<sup>499</sup> Green, *Art in France 1900-1940*, p. 40.

<sup>500</sup> The Société des Artistes Français restricted memberships only to French artists. Although a series of reforms led by Jean-Paul Laurens in 1901 had ended some restrictions on foreigners at the Salon, the juries of the Salon still remained exclusively French. Green, *Art in France 1900-1940*, p. 61.

<sup>501</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 50, 116, 119.



winners of the Exposition Universelle should be granted the same privileges as those who were awarded medals in the Salon; whereas his opponents feared that numerous award-winning artists at the Exposition Universelle, many of whom were foreigners, would weaken the authority of the Société des Artistes Français and the advantage of French artists. Meissonier insisted on equal privileges between French and foreign artists, because he regarded prizes as a concrete form of national glory.<sup>502</sup> A sense of mission to protect national glory in large part led to the establishment of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, whose intention was to protest against the increasingly commercial bazaar of the official Salon in the hands of the Société des Artistes Français, and to restore a pure and grand art.<sup>503</sup> The aim of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts to represent an honourable tradition and national glory in painting must have exerted some influence on Xu Beihong through Dagnan-Bouveret or Besnard. It largely inspired Xu Beihong to create history painting in the style of the Western grand manner, by assimilating Western realistic techniques and nationalist connotations into Chinese historical subjects. Xu Beihong's history painting will be studied in the following chapter.

Xu Beihong's academic perspective on Realism may account for his contradictory evaluation of Courbet and Manet, both of whom were representatives of Realism. Xu Beihong felt great admiration for Courbet, but disdained Manet. He praised Courbet several times for the dignified atmosphere that he created in the paintings.<sup>504</sup> Nonetheless, Xu Beihong criticised the fact that Manet was not equipped with solid realistic techniques.<sup>505</sup> Moreover, Xu Beihong's attack on Manet grew more and more bitter. In the frequently-cited

<sup>502</sup> Hungerford, 'Meissonier and the Founding the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', p. 71.

<sup>503</sup> Green, *Art in France 1900-1940*, p. 40.

<sup>504</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 84, 132.

<sup>505</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, p. 87.

treatise 'Doubts' (1929), which became the discursive assertion of Xu Beihong's adherent stance on realism, Xu Beihong showed a contempt for Manet's artistic accomplishments by saying that they were vulgar.<sup>506</sup> *The Meeting* by contrast revealed a photographic and reportage effect, representing Courbet's declaration that "painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the presentation of real and existing things" (Fig. 126).<sup>507</sup> Courbet's belief in Realism lent a fleshy tone to his nudes and thus made them look naked rather than nude in the classical sense (Fig. 127).<sup>508</sup> The emphasis on concreteness and contemporaneity separated Courbet's Realism from the academician's, whose perception of Realism lay in the accurate representation of costume and setting in historical genre painting (Fig. 91).<sup>509</sup> Although this photographic veracity left a factual and mundane feeling in the history painting of academic realism, the painstaking treatment of the genre scenes of antiquity demonstrated the academicians' respect for time-honoured tradition. On the contrary, Courbet's sole focus on the existing scenes of contemporary daily life made him an avant-garde Realist. In this light, Courbet and Manet were in the same camp of Realism in opposition to the academic one.

The fleshy tone in Courbet's nude is also seen in Manet's *Olympia* (Fig. 128). However, the nakedness in the *Olympia* looks more provocative.<sup>510</sup> The strong sense of being seen in the eyes of the painted woman, along with her gesture, suggested that there was an unpainted spectator, who was looking at her as a prostitute or commodity.<sup>511</sup> The spectator's gaze thus turned the classical

<sup>506</sup> Xu, 'Huo', p. 131.

<sup>507</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, p. 23.

<sup>508</sup> Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven and London, 2005), p. 81.

<sup>509</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>510</sup> T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London, 2003), pp. 131-133.

<sup>511</sup> Charles Harrison, 'Modernism', in Nelson and Shiff, *Critical Terms for Art History*, pp. 188-201 (pp. 190 & 197).

nude of a goddess into an image of a naked prostitute, which destroyed the dreamy and time-honoured beauty of the nude. Manet's *Olympia* found obvious association with classical nude painting, such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (Fig. 129). Nonetheless, the bitter parody and mundane effect separated Manet from tradition. Compared with Manet, Courbet's nude painting revealed more directly his admiration for the masters of former times, such as Velázquez and Rembrandt, to name but a few.<sup>512</sup> The theorist of contemporary art Craig Owen has argued that the history of modernist painting began with Manet and not Courbet, because the latter represented an association with history painting in his allegorical works.<sup>513</sup> Xu Beihong's criticism of Manet coincided with that of the academic Realists, such as Jules Breton (1827-1906), who criticised Manet as a mediocre pupil of Goya and Velázquez. Some critics contemporaneous with Manet also criticised the flatness in his paintings.<sup>514</sup> However, the self-critical and flat traits led Manet to be regarded as a modernist by Clement Greenberg, an influential figure in the formulation of modernist art history.<sup>515</sup> By comparison, the more obvious traces of realistic craftsmanship and classical implications in Courbet's paintings made him a more accomplished Realist in Xu Beihong's eyes, in opposition to Manet's vulgarity.

Xu Beihong's perception of Western realism was shaped by academic aesthetics. On the other hand, the academic representation of Realism appealed to him because it could fulfil Xu Beihong's aspirations to bring Chinese painting into a modern era. The thoroughly realistic rendering of Realism responded to China's call for scientific civilisation. The beautification of academic realism

<sup>512</sup> Thomas N. Maytham, 'A Reclining Nude by Gustave Courbet', *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 57.309 (1959), pp. 76-82 (p. 81).

<sup>513</sup> Craig Owen, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', in Donald Preziosi ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, 1998), pp.315-328 (p.321).

<sup>514</sup> Milner, *The Studios of Paris*, p. 102.

<sup>515</sup> Harrison, 'Modernism', pp. 191-192.

further fitted Cai Yuanpei's promotion of aesthetic value in painting. The painstaking realism and poetic representation of academic realism may have appealed to Xu Beihong as it expressed his ideas of fine art, as seen in the article, 'Beauty and Art in Painting'.

Xu Beihong's reading of Western realism not only demonstrated his academic training, but also revealed his Occidental perspective.<sup>516</sup> He often provided a comparative view of Western and Chinese painting and read Western realism through his vision of Chinese painting history. For example, in the article, 'The Anatomy of Beauty – A Speech Given to the Shanghai Kailuo Company', Xu Beihong argued:

There are two major styles in art, one is the idealistic and the other is the realistic. The realistic puts emphasis on the form of the depicted object; while the idealistic puts it on the depiction of a transcendent realm. Because an idealistic artist's pursuit is a transcendent effect in his work, he draws from nature mainly to achieve that effect. Hence, the depicted scenery only serves as a medium to fulfil the artist's goal of idealistic expression. Nevertheless, it does not mean that an idealistic artist is unable to depict scenery realistically. He just intentionally avoids that realistic depiction so as to catch a spiritually untrammelled quality, aiming to go beyond the rigid verisimilitude executed by realistic skills. If a person cannot paint realistically, he is definitely unable to create some idealistic effect beyond the concrete object. However, some painters who are poor at depicting things realistically claim that their works are executed in the idealistic manner. This claim is ridiculous, but many people are not experienced enough to tell it. Therefore, there are quite a few failings in the promotion of idealistic art expression. These shortcomings appear in today's art arena in Europe, while they have been pervasive in China since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). China's art arena is at its worst nowadays, and those failings are such that Chinese painters are unable to observe objects in detail.

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<sup>516</sup> On Occidentalism and the Chinese intellectuals' construction of the West in the early twentieth century, see Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, pp. 128-148.

Nor are they able to execute their ideas with their hands. As a result, to reinvigorate Chinese art, we have to re-promote its classicism, which is, for example, exemplified in the magnitude and resourcefulness of Song painting as well as in its open-minded treatment of all kinds of subject matters for depiction. Moreover, to make up for the present deficiencies of Chinese art, we have to adopt European realism, such as Dutch painters' thorough study of subjects, as well as the refined composition in the works of French painters, such as Courbet, Millet, Bastien-Lepage, and the German Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900). A piece of artwork of good quality must demonstrate its thoroughness, refinement, vigorousness, and completeness, all of which constitute the merits of realism.

美術上之兩大派，曰理想，曰寫實。寫實主義重象。理想派則另立意境，惟以當時境物，供其假借使用而已。但所謂假借使用物象，則其不滿所志，非不能工，不求工也。故超然卓絕，若不能逼寫，則況必不能及于物象之上，之外，亦托體寫意，其愚彌可□也。昧者不察之，故理想派茲多流弊，今日之歐洲亦然。中國自明即然，今日乃特甚，其弊竟至藝人并觀察亦不精確，其手之不從心，無代言矣。故欲振中國之藝術，必須重倡吾國美術之古典主義，如尊宋人尚繁密平等，畫材不專尚山水。欲就目前之弊，必採歐洲之寫實主義，如荷蘭人體物之精，法國庫爾貝、米勒、勒班習，德國萊柏爾等，構境之雅。美術品貴精貴工，貴滿貴足，寫實之功成於是。<sup>517</sup>

In this paragraph, Xu Beihong mentions realism twice and regards realism as a mode of art expression involving realistic craftsmanship. His view of Western realism in this paragraph remained the same as those discussed above. Moreover, he applied an Occidental perspective to compare the development of Western painting with that of Chinese. Xu Beihong paralleled Chinese literati painting with Western modernist painting by using the traditional Chinese art-historical term, *xieyi* (寫意, 'conceptual depiction'). The dichotomy of *xieshi* and *xieyi* represented the binary opposition of professional and literati painting in the formulation of Chinese art history. Generally, Song painting stood for the

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<sup>517</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Mei de jiepu', p. 84.

epitome of *xieshi* and Yuan painting for *xieyi*. This dichotomy reached its apogee in the art discourse of the Ming dynasty and legitimised the superiority of conceptual depiction of literati painting in the hierarchy of Chinese painting.<sup>518</sup> Xu Beihong compared *xieyi* to Western modernist painting, and paralleled Western modernist painting with Chinese literati painting after the Ming dynasty. This parallel revealed that Xu Beihong's personal reading of Western realism was grounded in his aspirations to reform Chinese painting. Xu Beihong argued that Western modernist painting was following the regressive path of Chinese painting, which had resulted from its dismissal of pictorial realism in favour of conceptual depiction. Accordingly, Western modernist painting was not the solution to the reform of Chinese painting. On the contrary, the assimilation of Western realistic craftsmanship and the re-discovering of Chinese Song painting were the prescription. Xu Beihong's opinion on reforming Chinese painting was also stated in the article, 'On Ancient and Modern, Chinese and Western Art – A Speech Given at Datong University', in which he argued:

I insist that the present decadence of Chinese art cannot be remedied without trumpeting realism. Someday, the establishment of new Chinese art schools must depend on an indigenous Chinese classicism, which consists of an emphasis upon the depiction of a transcendent realm in painting as well as on the accomplished skills of refined outline drawing.

吾個人對於中國目前藝術之頹敗，絕非力倡寫實主義不為功。吾中國他日新派之成立，必有賴吾國固有之古典主義，如畫則尚意境，精鈎勒等技。<sup>519</sup>

In the article of 1918, 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting', Xu Beihong pointed out conformism as the cause of the regression of Chinese painting in modern times.<sup>520</sup> His point of view

<sup>518</sup> Wang, 'Rediscovering Song Painting for the Nation', pp. 27-30.

<sup>519</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Gujin Zhongwai yishulun – Zai Datong daxue jiangyanci', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 97-103 (p. 103).

<sup>520</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 39.

apparently followed that of the influential intellectual Kang Youwei and he had not yet developed his own perspective. Later on, his academic training shaped his formulation of Chinese painting history. At the same time, his ambitions to reform Chinese painting, which he had revealed in the article of 1918, in turn underlay his Occidental reading of Western realism. Xu Beihong's comparative study of Chinese and Western painting demonstrated the continuing influence of Kang Youwei, Cai Yuanpei and the pro-Western New Culture Movement on him. Nonetheless, he drew on French academic art to gradually formulate his personal reading of Chinese painting, which on the one hand fitted the interior call for modernising Chinese art, and on the other hand elevated the significance of his training background in indigenous *xiezhen* and Western realism. It is important to stress that before Xu Beihong pursued art studies in Paris, the term 'realism' (*xieshi* or *xieshi zhuyi*) did not appear in his speeches and articles. After he returned to China in 1926, Xu Beihong cited the authority of French academic art to develop his personal version of Chinese and Western painting, which centred on realism. Xu Beihong's academic training helped to fulfil his aspirations to reverse the standing of professional and literati painting. This revision of Chinese painting history and hierarchy was elaborated in the article, *Lun Zhongguohua* (論中國畫, 'On Chinese Painting', 1938), a revised Chinese version of the preface to the catalogue *Exposition de la Peinture Chinoise* (Exhibition of Chinese Painting), which was published in 1933 for the exhibition of modern Chinese painting (*Exposition d'Art Chinois Contemporain*) held in the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris.<sup>521</sup> In the article 'On Chinese Painting',

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<sup>521</sup> Shelagh Vainker, 'Exhibitions of Modern Chinese Painting in Europe, 1933-1935', in Cao

Xu Beihong used some Western art-historical terms to describe Chinese painting.<sup>522</sup> The Song dynasty was highly regarded by Xu Beihong as the golden age of Chinese painting. It was seen as the first dynasty in China to establish an art academy. Moreover, Song painting represented for Xu that idealised Realism, which was also crystallised in the works of Dagnan-Bouveret, Puvis de Chavannes and Rodin. Xu Beihong further compared Song painters to Western classical masters, whose artistic accomplishments went beyond mere Realism. Xu Beihong's high praise for Song painting concurred with the consensus among the intelligentsia, as discussed in Chapter 2.4. In addition, Xu Beihong's comparative study of Chinese and Western painting paralleled Yuan painting with Western idealism. For Xu Beihong, Yuan painting was like Impressionism, in that it first aimed to supplement the over painstaking craftsmanship of realistic Song painting. Nonetheless, the unskilled literati painters took advantage of the conceptual depiction of idealism, and thereby led to the conformism and regression of Chinese painting, just as the Western modernists were doing to Western painting. Xu Beihong compared the orthodoxy of literati aesthetics in Chinese painting to the status of academic painting in the Western art world.<sup>523</sup> By this parallel, Xu Beihong indicated the mistake that Chinese painting made in legitimising literati painting as the orthodoxy, which led to the reverse of the standing of Chinese painting and civilization in the world after Song dynasty. Therefore, the realistic attainments of Ren Bonian in the nineteenth century were highly regarded

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Yiqiang 曹意強 and Fan Jingzhong 范景中 eds, *Ershi shiji Zhongguohua: Chuantong de yanxuyu yanjin* 二十世紀中國畫：傳統的延續與演進, 'Chinese Painting in the Twentieth Century: Creativity in the Aftermath of Tradition' (Hangzhou, 1997), pp. 554-561 (pp. 554-555).

<sup>522</sup> Xu, 'Lun Zhongguohua', pp. 357-364.

<sup>523</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 139.



by Xu Beihong as they broke away from the Chinese academic tradition, the conceptual depiction of literati painting.

Through the interchanging of Chinese and Western art-historical terms, Xu Beihong found in Western academic art both the resolution to China's call for reforming Chinese painting and a way of preserving the essence of Chinese tradition. The academic formulation of Western painting history helped the formation of Xu Beihong's personal version of Chinese painting, which played a decisive role in shaping the contours of twentieth century Chinese art. The authority of Western orthodoxy, in the form of academic art became a mighty prop for Xu Beihong to strengthen his promotion of realism in the Westernised art field in China.

### 4.3 Fashioning Identity as a Modern Chinese Painter

Xu Beihong returned to China in 1926 to look for financial support in order to continue his studies in Paris. He left France in 1925 and arrived in Shanghai in February 1926. During his journey home, he stayed in Singapore for a few months from the winter of 1925 to January 1926.<sup>524</sup> On the liner that Xu Beihong took in Singapore, he met Cai Yuanpei and Lin Fengmian, who had boarded the same liner from France. *Shibao* carried the news with the headline, 'Xu Beihong returned to Shanghai', as follows: "Xu Beihong, the ex-tutor of the Beijing University Painting Research Society and ex-professor of art at the Cangsheng University, is the first student who won the scholarship of the Education Ministry to study in Europe. After staying in France for seven years, he has returned from Paris on the same liner as Cai Yuanpei and Lin Fengmian" (Fig. 130).<sup>525</sup> The news about Xu Beihong's identity as the first art student with governmental funding was published in both *Shibao* and *Shenbao* on 18 March 1919.<sup>526</sup> *Shibao* and *Shenbao* were among the most popular Shanghai-based newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century. *Shenbao*'s involvement in Shanghai's vitural culture has been studies in Chapter 2. *Shibao* had been launched in 1904 and ceased in 1939. Its breakthroughs in page layout and printing equipment made it a leading newspaper in China.<sup>527</sup> It was also among the earliest newspapers to carry translations of foreign novels regularly as well as publishing criticism on modern Chinese poetry. Therefore, *Shibao* had been

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<sup>524</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>525</sup> *Shibao*, 3 March 1926.

<sup>526</sup> Wang Zhen ed., *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao* 20 世紀上海美術年表, 'A Chronology of Art in Shanghai in the Twentieth Century' (Shanghai, 2005), p. 87.

<sup>527</sup> Hu Daojing 胡道靜, 'Shanghai de ribao' 上海的日報, 'Newspapers of Shanghai', *Shanghai Tongzhiguan qikan*, 2.1 (1934), pp. 219-325, in Shen, *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan xuji*, Vol. XXXIX. For a history of Chinese journalism, also see Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Honolulu, 2004).

considered as a modern newspaper reflecting its epoch.<sup>528</sup> As to its association with visual culture, *Shibao*'s advanced printing equipment and technology made possible the issuing of the high quality *Shibao Pictorial* (*Shibao tuhua* 時報圖畫) in 1920.<sup>529</sup> The burgeoning publication of pictorials in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s was in close association with the vigour of the contemporaneous art arena.<sup>530</sup> On the one hand, the pictorials provided the platform for artists to disseminate their ideas and display their works; on the other hand, the pictorials helped to shape their public images and legitimise their positions in the art world. As Julia Andrews has observed, some young artists who were apart from a particular artistic circle or locale, "succeeded not only artistically, as defined by the creation of an immediately recognisable personal style, but also in achieving a degree of national celebrity only possible with a modern mass media".<sup>531</sup> The flourishing publishing industry in Shanghai in the 1920s turned Xu Beihong into a sensation immediately after he returned to sojourn in Shanghai for only a few months in 1926.

Xu Beihong arrived in Shanghai in early February, 1926, and left for Paris by late April.<sup>532</sup> In 1926, news of Xu Beihong appeared in the *Shenbao* around 19 times, mostly published in March and April during Xu Beihong's sojourn in Shanghai.<sup>533</sup> Besides, *Shibao* also carried news of Xu Beihong about 11 times.

<sup>528</sup> Ge Gongzhen 戈公振, *Zhongguo baoxueshi* 中國報學史, 'History of Chinese Journalism' (Beijing, 1955), pp. 141-145.

<sup>529</sup> On *Shibao*'s new printing technology, see Hu, 'Shanghai de ribao', p. 269.

<sup>530</sup> Leo Qu-fan Lee, 'The Construction of Modernity in Print Culture', in Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Massachusetts, 1999), pp. 43-81.

<sup>531</sup> Julia Andrews et al., *Between the Thunder and the Rain: Chinese Painting from the Opium War through the Cultural Revolution, 1840-1979* (San Francisco, 2000), p. 186.

<sup>532</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 40. As far as I know, there is no precise date about when Xu Beihong left Shanghai for Paris in 1926 in published sources. According to *Xu Beihong nianpu*, Xu Beihong arrived in Paris in the late spring of 1926. Moreover, news of Xu Beihong did not appear in the press from May 1926, so he must leave for Paris no later than early May, 1926.

<sup>533</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, pp. 181-215. The news about Xu Beihong appeared on 6 & 18 February; 5, 7, 13, 25, 29 & 31 March; 2, 5, 8, 21, 24 & 25 April; 25 September; 28 October; and 24 December 1926.

During March and April of 1926, items of news about Xu Beihong were published in *Shenbao* and *Shibao* a total of 25 times. These items of news show that Xu Beihong had a busy schedule when he stayed in Shanghai. He gave at least 10 talks in a few weeks.<sup>534</sup> Before publishing each of these talks, the newspapers often added a short account of Xu Beihong to facilitate the readership's understanding of this young artist. These introductions contributed to the shaping of Xu Beihong's public image as an accomplished and modern painter. Take the short introduction of Xu Beihong given by *Shibao* on 3 March 1926, which is quoted in the first paragraph of this section, as an example, the information is not completely right. Xu Beihong was not on the same ship with Cai Yuanpei and Lin Fengmian from Paris. Nevertheless, this claim established a close association between Xu Beihong and the influential intellectual Cai Yuanpei, as well as with the new star in the art world, Lin Fengmian, who was just appointed principal of the National Beijing Art College (*Guoli Beiping yishu zhuanmen xuexiao* 國立北平藝術專門學校, formerly the National School of Fine Art) in early 1926.<sup>535</sup> Moreover, the introduction mentioned Xu Beihong's status as the first government founded student, citing official authority as

<sup>534</sup> Most of these talks have been repeatedly republished with some slight alterations to their titles. *Liufa yishu zhuanjia Xu Beihong jun fangwenji* (留法藝術專家徐悲鴻君訪問記, 'Interview with the Art Specialist, Xu Beihong, who Studied in France') was republished with the title, 'The Current Situation in French Art'; *Xu Beihong jun xueshu yanjiu zhi tanhua* (徐悲鴻君學術研究之談話, 'A Talk on Academic Research by Mr Xu Beihong') was republished with the title, 'A Talk on Academic Research'; *Xu Beihong yong wuxian dianhua yanshuo meishu* (徐悲鴻用無線電話演說美術, 'Xu Beihong Delivered A Speech via Radio Telephone') was republished with the title, 'The Anatomy of Beauty – A Speech Given to the Shanghai Kailuo Company'; *Meishujia Xu Beihong zhi tanhua* (美術家徐悲鴻之談話, 'A Talk Given by the Artist Xu Beihong') was republished with the title, 'Conversation on Art with a Journalist of the Shibao'; *Yishujia de gongfu* (藝術家的功夫, 'The Attainments of An Artist') was republished as 'A Speech Given at the Chinese University of Art'; *Meishujia Xu Beihong shangxia gujin zhi lun* (美術家徐悲鴻上下古今之論, 'The Opinions of the Artist Xu Beihong on Art of the High and Low, the Ancient and Modern'), or *Xu Beihong duiyu guohua de yijian – Zai Datong daxue yanshuo jingxuanhui zhi yanshuoci* (徐悲鴻對於國畫的意見 – 在大同大學演說競選會之演說詞, 'Xu Beihong's Opinions on National Painting – A Talk Given at the Speech Competition of Datong University') was later republished with the title, 'On Ancient and Modern, Chinese and Western Art – A Speech Given at Datong University'. On a detailed schedule of Xu Beihong's speeches, see Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 190.

<sup>535</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 43.

approval for Xu Beihong's artistic accomplishments. Following the short introduction of Xu Beihong, the news reported the small exhibition of Xu Beihong's Western style works in the Dadong hotel (*Dadong liishe* 大東旅社) as follows: "Xu Beihong displayed more than 40 oil and figure paintings, which were executed during his time in Europe, at the gathering of The Society of Plum Blossom (*Meihuahui* 梅花會) in the Dadong hotel. The brushwork is steady and the colour refined, representing a subtle quality. Xu Beihong just returned to Shanghai from his hometown Yixing yesterday, and since then he has been busy attending welcome parties, which were held by his mentors and friends, such as Kang Youwei, Ji Juemi, Huang Jingwan, Chen Baoyi, Wang Yiting (王一亭, 1866-1938) and Tian Han (田漢, 1898-1968), to name but a few.<sup>536</sup> Kang Youwei introduced Xu Beihong as follows: "My disciple Beihong demonstrated talent for art as early as 10 years ago when he realistically portrayed me, as well as the eminent Qing officials Qu Hongji (瞿鴻禨, 1850-1918) and Shen Zipei (沈子培, 1851-1922). Later on, he visited Japan and then pursued art studies in France for seven years. Hence, he obtained a solid grounding in painting. Today, he shows me his works, which are the best in China".<sup>537</sup> By establishing associations with significant educational institutions, such as Beijing University, and with influential intellectuals, such as Kang Youwei and Cai Yuanpei, the *Shibao* cited their prestige to construct Xu Beihong's image as a distinguished artist, whose reputation had been approved before his artistic achievements were examined by the public.

In addition to the associations with well-established intellectuals of the political and cultural fields, Xu Beihong was also connected to the more

<sup>536</sup> Wang Yiting was the leading artist of Chinese painting and calligraphy in Shanghai. Yun, *Minguo shuhua jia huizhuan* p. 31. On Tian Han, see Dong Jian 董健, *Tian Han* 田漢 (Beijing, 1999).

<sup>537</sup> *Shibao*, 3 March 1926.

avant-garde circle of Shanghai. Tian Han was the principle organizer of the gathering in the Dadong hotel in February 1926, and invited more than 150 participants, including the artists Lin Fengmian, Ni Yide (倪貽德, 1901-1970), Feng Zikai (豐子愷, 1898-1975) and Li Jinfa (李金髮, 1900-1976).<sup>538</sup> Tian Han was a left-wing dramatist, who played a decisive role in shaping the contours of modern Chinese drama. He was the editor of the supplement of the *Central Daily* newspaper (中央日報), entitled *Modeng* (摩登), the Chinese equivalent of the English 'modern'. Xu Beihong designed a rooster for the letterhead of the *Modeng* supplement (Fig. 131).<sup>539</sup> Moreover, Tian Han established the South China Art Academy (*Nanguo yishu xueyuan* 南國藝術學院) in 1928 and invited Xu Beihong to take charge of the painting department. They claimed to be 'of the bohemian class'.<sup>540</sup> Ni Yide was one of the founding members of the Storm Society (*Juelanshe* 決瀾社), the representative artistic association of Western avant-garde art in China in the 1930s (Fig. 132).<sup>541</sup> Feng Zikai's artistic accomplishments were all-round. He was a writer, painter, and cartoonist. He re-interpreted traditional Chinese literature and art in cartoon form (Fig. 133).<sup>542</sup> Li Jinfa was a sculptor. He studied art in Paris from 1919 to 1924, contemporaneous with Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian.<sup>543</sup> These artists were of the relatively avant-garde generation in the art world. The *Shenbao* reported this cultural event, mentioning the exhibition of Xu Beihong's works and remarking

<sup>538</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 186.

<sup>539</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 47.

<sup>540</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 112. On Tian Han's connections with the art circle of his day, see Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, pp. 34, 47 & 69.

<sup>541</sup> Ralph Croizier, 'Post-Impressionist in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China', in John Clark ed., *Modernity in Asian Art* (Sydney, 1993), pp. 135-154.

<sup>542</sup> Geremie R. Barmé, *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)* (California and London, 2002).

<sup>543</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 307.

that Xu Beihong's works represented the epitome of Western art.<sup>544</sup> Through the associations with the avant-garde circle, Xu Beihong was highly regarded as a reputable agent of Western art immediately after he returned from Paris.

The exhibition also demonstrated Xu Beihong's aspirations to shape his image as a modern force in China's art world through his accomplishments in Western art. The purpose of Xu Beihong's journey home was to get money to continue his studies in Paris. Hence, he stopped at Singapore for several months to earn money by painting rich merchants.<sup>545</sup> He must not have planned to stay in China too long, as he left his wife in Paris until he returned. Nonetheless, during his short sojourn in China, he still brought with him many works. It appears that Xu Beihong was active in looking for any opportunities to promote himself. In addition to retaining his relationships with Kang Youwei, Ji Juemi and Huang Jingwan, who had good political or cultural connections in Shanghai, Xu Beihong actively created new connections with figures who were more influential in the art world, such as Chen Baoyi, Feng Zikai, Ni Yide and Tian Han. They were very active in the Shanghai art world in the 1920s. They not only built their reputation by their artistic accomplishments, but also created their influence through engaging in art education. Chen Baoyi was the founder of the Chinese University of Art (*Zhonghua yishu daxue* 中華藝術大學), which was established in 1925. He also taught painting at the *Lida* School (*Lida xueyuan* 立達學園), established by Feng Zikai in 1925. Ni Yide taught at the Shanghai Art Academy. Tian Han taught at the Shanghai University of Art (*Shanghai yishu daxue* 上海藝術大學) in 1925 and founded the South China Art Academy in early 1928. These art schools were among the most renowned and

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<sup>544</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 186.

<sup>545</sup> On Xu Beihong's experiences in Singapore, see Ouyang Yixing 歐陽義興, *Beihong zai Xingzhou* 悲鴻在星洲, 'Beihong in Singapore' (Singapore, 1999); also *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang*.

influential art institutions in Shanghai in their day.<sup>546</sup> The 1920s saw the maturity of the Westernised art field. Art institutions sprung up and were led by the professional artists of the fine art arena. In other words, fine art gradually separated from commercial art.<sup>547</sup> When Xu Beihong developed his career in Shanghai in the 1910s, he was more a commercial painter than an artist. His acquaintances were mostly those outside fine art circles, although they may have had good artistic connections. Nonetheless, during the journey home in 1926, Xu Beihong seemingly endeavoured to establish his reputation in the fine art field in Shanghai, through displaying his works on the occasions when a lot of artists gathered.

The reports about Xu Beihong's Westernised paintings and cultural connections in *Shenbao* and *Shibao* successfully drew attention from both the press and artistic circles. *Shibao* published its journalist Wan Ye's (萬葉) interview with Xu Beihong on 5 March 1926, only two days after the news entitled 'Xu Beihong returned to Shanghai'. Wang Ye in the interview highly regarded Xu Beihong as the most distinguished among the Chinese students who studied art in Paris. Xu Beihong was one among only two Chinese students who were admitted to study at the École des Beaux-Arts. In the annual examination of the École, Xu Beihong was placed fourteenth, while Fang Junbi (方君璧, 1898-1986), the other Chinese student admitted to study at the École, was placed seventy-fourth.<sup>548</sup> Wang Ye also mentioned Xu Beihong's diligence. One evening, he ran into Xu Beihong in Paris. Xu Beihong was only just going back

<sup>546</sup> 'Zhongguo Minchu de meishu xuexiao' 中國民初的美術學校, 'The Art Schools of the Early Republican Period', *Yishujia*, 11.1 (1980), pp. 150-168. Li Chunkang 李純康, 'Shanghai de gaodeng jiaoyu' 上海的高等教育, 'Higher Education in Shanghai', *Shanghai Tongzhiguan qikan*, 2.2 (1934), pp. 603-668, reprinted in Shen, *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan xuji*, Vol. XXXIX.

<sup>547</sup> Chen, 'Yanghua zai Zhongguo liuchuan de guocheng', pp. 25-29.

<sup>548</sup> On Fang Junbi, see Frank Dunand, *The Pavilion of the Martial Harmony: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy between Tradition and Modernity* (Geneva, 2002).



to his place from school. He was very preoccupied with his studies, and thus he became an illustrious artist.<sup>549</sup> Wang Ye's report about Xu Beihong's life in Paris provided a convincing support for Xu Beihong's attainments in Western art, which were held in high esteem in the press.

Wang Ye also published a commentary on Xu Beihong's artistic achievements, in which he itemised Xu Beihong's paintings that he saw in a visit to Jiang Meisheng's (蔣梅笙) house.<sup>550</sup> Jiang Meisheng was Xu Beihong's father-in-law, and Xu Beihong stayed at his place when he sojourned in Shanghai. According to Wang Ye's report, Jiang Meisheng's house was filled with Xu Beihong's own works and with his collection. Since Xu Beihong stayed there, artists and journalists had come one after the other. Wang Ye had met the artists Ding Song and Yang Qingqing (楊清磬, 1893-1957) when he reached Jiang Meisheng's house.<sup>551</sup> Ding Song and Yang Qingqing both were leading members of the Heavenly Horse Society. They were known for their Western-style painting and active in the commercial art world of Shanghai. When Xu Beihong started his career in Shanghai in the 1910s, Ding Song and Yang Qingqing were much more influential than him in the Shanghai art world. Their standing seemed to be reversed in this report. Wang Ye praised Xu Beihong as a prolific painter, and he was particularly impressed by the four paintings: *Miyue* (蜜月, 'Honeymoon', 1925), *Jiang Biwei zhenying* (蔣碧薇真影, 'Portrait of Jiang Biwei', 1925), *Luoti nülang juanxi tu* (裸體女郎倦怠圖, 'Model Taking a Rest') and *Lüyitong* (綠衣童, 'Child in Green Clothes'). The *Honeymoon* portrayed a couple, Huang Tianen (黃天恩) and Fu Jigu (傅季姑), in oils (Fig. 134). Huang Tianen was a rich merchant in Singapore. The portrait painting was executed in

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<sup>549</sup> *Shibao*, 5 March 1926.

<sup>550</sup> *Shibao*, 9 March 1926.

<sup>551</sup> For a brief account of Yang Qingqing, see Yun, *Minguo shuhuaqia huizhuan* p. 269.

1925 when Xu Beihong stopped by Singapore.<sup>552</sup> According to Wang Ye's description, Jiang Biwei in the *Portrait of Jiang Biwei* was portrayed in casual dress, sitting at her desk and reading books. This image accorded with the portrait of Jiang Biwei that was executed in 1925 (Fig. 135). The painstaking craftsmanship and photographic verisimilitude of Jiang Biwei's portrait demonstrated Xu Beihong's solid grounding in French academic training. Besides, the *Model Taking a Rest* and *Child in Green Clothes* matched the two pictures collected in *Beihong huiji* (悲鴻繪集, 'A Collection of Beihong's Paintings'), which was published by the Zhonghua Bookstore in Shanghai in 1926.<sup>553</sup> In addition to the aforementioned four paintings, Wang Ye described the oil painting *Fumao* (撫貓, 'Petting the Cat', 1924), which he called *Baimao* (白貓, 'White cat') in his report (Fig. 136). *Petting the Cat* depicted Xu Beihong and his wife, and was executed in 1924. Wang Ye also mentioned Xu Beihong's copy of Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*. Wang Ye provided the public with an account of Xu Beihong's artistic attainments, and by this means reinforced Xu Beihong's image as an accomplished and admirable artist.

The oil painting *Honeymoon* was published in the *Shibao Pictorial* on 28 March 1926. Although this painting was a portrait of the rich merchant couple, revealing the commercial side of a painter, the realistic craftsmanship demonstrated a direct reference to Western art. Compared with Xu Beihong's early portraits, which also represented Xu Beihong's skill in realistic rendering, the brushwork, medium and live models of the *Honeymoon* indicated that French academic training had dominated Xu Beihong's pictorial practices. Xu Beihong's art had gone beyond the hybrid realism pervasive in the commercial art world of

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<sup>552</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 33.

<sup>553</sup> Xu Beihong, *Beihong huiji* (Shanghai, 1936), p. 40.

Shanghai, as discussed in Chapter 2, and was directly modelled on Western painting. Besides the *Honeymoon*, the *Shibao Pictorial* also published another picture of Xu Beihong, in which Xu Beihong was photographed with his oil portrait of Kang Youwei (Fig. 137). By comparing the two portraits of Kang Youwei that Xu Beihong executed in 1917 and in the 1920s respectively, it provided a glimpse into the changes that Xu Beihong had undergone in his creative trajectory. In the picture, Xu Beihong is formally attired in a suit with flowing tie, with a palette and some paintbrushes in his left hand, which projects the image of a Western artist. Moreover, Xu Beihong cited Kang Youwei's influence in the cultural field to back up his own accomplishments in Western art. Xu Beihong seemingly took full advantage of this practice to build his reputation. For example, he made an oil portrait of Ren Bonian in 1927 (Fig. 138). It may serve as an exemplification of his great admiration for Ren Bonian, which was manifested in his speeches. In 1926, Xu Beihong also visited an exhibition on Ren Bonian, in which he was invited to talk about Ren Bonian's accomplishments. Xu Beihong's admiration for Ren Bonian was thought to contribute to his acquisition of several Ren Bonian's works from a collector.<sup>554</sup> From the late 1920s, Xu Beihong made several portraits of Chen Sanyuan (陳散原, 1853-1937) (Figs 139-140). Chen Sanyuan was Chen Shizeng's father, was both an illustrious traditional poet and a reform-minded Qing scholar. Kang Youwei, Ren Bonian and Chen Sanyuan were all masters of traditional Chinese literature or art; meanwhile they also took a critical perspective on their tradition. Their portraits in oils not only served as the exemplifications of Xu Beihong's artistic achievements, but also as the objects of social practice. They demonstrated Xu Beihong's attainments in Western art. Moreover, Xu Beihong

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<sup>554</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 37-38.

cited their eminence to claim to be the modern successor and reformer of the great achievements of Chinese culture.

Xu Beihong's aspiration to be a modern artist not only was manifested in his oil portraits, but was particularly reflected in his public image. Xu Beihong's image as a Western artist in the picture of 28 March 1926 *Shibao Pictorial* is reminiscent of his dandy appearance as seen in the photograph of 1923 (Fig. 98). His image in Western attire was also published in the *Shibao* on 7 March 1926, along with a compliment on his government-funded honour, and his comprehensive knowledge of both Chinese and Western art. Moreover, the brief report mentioned that Xu Beihong's paintings were accepted by the French official Salon; his artistic attainments were acquired through his painstaking craftsmanship. The report also mentioned that Xu Beihong was leaving Shanghai for Rome soon to continue his studies on art (Fig. 141). It seemed that Xu Beihong's image of an accomplished spokesman for Western art was assured through the press.

The mass media played the decisive role in shaping Xu Beihong's image as a modern artist; meanwhile, Xu Beihong himself also intended to display such an image in public. In August 1927 after Xu Beihong returned to China permanently, he displayed a more avant-garde image. Dagney Carter described his impression of Xu Beihong when he saw the artist in 1927. He said that it was easy to recognise Xu Beihong's image of a bohemian artist through "his long hair, velvet coat, flowing tie and detached languid manners, as well as his excellent French, which suggested the Latin Quarter".<sup>555</sup> Xu Beihong's bohemian image responded to his claim to be "of the bohemian class" when participating in the establishment of the South China Academy of Art. The founding members of the

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<sup>555</sup> Dagney Carter, 'Modern Chinese Painters', *Asia*, 34.4 (1934), pp. 224-229 (p. 228).

Academy also included Tian Han, Xu Zhimo and Yu Dafu (郁達夫, 1896-1945), who were open-minded to the latest trends of Western art and literature.<sup>556</sup> In retrospect, Xu Beihong has been criticized as a conservative agent of Western art in China's art field. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong apparently assumed his image as an avant-garde artist in China in the 1920s; and this very modern image was also constructed and approved by the press of his day.

Xu Beihong became an instant celebrity in 1926 through the promotion of the mass media. His lectures, interviews and activities were often to be read in the newspapers. Moreover, his speeches were aired on the radio to reach a wider audience. For example, the American invested *Kailuo* company (開洛) invited Xu Beihong to give a speech on 13 March 1926, which was contemporaneously aired by the *Kailuo* broadcasting station and was also published in the *Shibao* on 19 March.<sup>557</sup> The *Kailuo* broadcasting studio was set up in the *Shenbao* building in 1924 and became one of the earliest broadcasting companies in China.<sup>558</sup> Before Xu Beihong's speech, the deputy chairman of the Shanghai Association of Journalism (*Shanghai xinwen xuehui* 上海新聞學會) introduced Xu Beihong as an internationally acclaimed painter, who had been an illustrious painter in China in the 1910s.<sup>559</sup> The Shanghai Association of Journalism made great contributions to the rapid accumulation of Xu Beihong's reputation in 1926. First, it invited Xu Beihong to give a talk on 'The Origin and Essence of Art' on 7 March. The audience was large, including pro-Western artists and associations, such as Zhang Yuguang and the Dawn Society of Fine Arts, as well as students of Shanghai art schools.<sup>560</sup> On 9 March, the Shanghai Association of Journalism

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<sup>556</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 112.

<sup>557</sup> The published form of this speech, see Xu, 'Mei de jiepou', pp. 83-84.

<sup>558</sup> Zhao Yuming 趙玉明, *Zhongguo xiandai guangbo jianshi 1923-1949* 中國現代廣播簡史 1923-1949, 'A Concise History of Broadcasting in China 1923-1949' (Beijing, 1987).

<sup>559</sup> *Shibao*, 19 March 1926.

<sup>560</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 35.

gave a banquet for Xu Beihong. The chairman complimented Xu Beihong on his academic techniques and international reputation. The participants included Huang Jingwan, Chen Baoyi, Wang Yiting, Lang Jingshan (郎靜山, 1892-1995) and Zhou Shoujuan (周瘦鵑, 1895-1968), to name but a few. They were accomplished artists or writers in different areas of the art and literary fields.<sup>561</sup> Through speeches and gatherings, Xu Beihong quickly drew attention from the influential figures of the Shanghai art world. On 29 March, Chen Baoyi invited Xu Beihong to visit his studio and invited Xu Beihong to address the Chinese University of Art, the art school that Chen Baoyi founded. Xu Beihong made two speeches there; one was on 31 March and the other on 4 April.<sup>562</sup> In later April, Xu Beihong was appointed the professor of Western painting at the Chinese University of Art.

Although Xu Beihong left Shanghai for Paris as early as late April, his reputation was established and he continued to participate in artistic activities in Shanghai. His works were on display at the exhibition of the Chinese University of Art, which was held in the winter of 1926. *Shenbao* reported that there were over a thousand pieces of work on display at the exhibition, including those by such contemporary masters as Li Shutong, Zhang Yuguang, Wu Changshuo and Xu Beihong, etc.<sup>563</sup> Xu Beihong was seen as being as prominent as those who had been active in the Shanghai art world much longer than him. In September 1927, soon after he returned to China permanently, Xu Beihong participated in the large-scale Associated Art Exhibition (*Meishu lianhe zhanlanhui* 美術聯合展覽

<sup>561</sup> Lang Jingshan was one of the most prominent figures in the course of Chinese art photography. He was famous for using the photographic montage to create the poetic images in traditional Chinese landscape painting. On Lang Jingshan, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 154-171. Zhou Shoujuan was a renowned writer of the romantic Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School. See Chen Jianhua 陳建華, 'Love Stories and Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies Fiction', in Joshua Mostow ed., *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York, 2003), pp. 355-363.

<sup>562</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>563</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 207.

會) which was organised by the Chinese University of Art and the Dawn Society of Fine Arts. The exhibitors included Zhang Yuguang, Ni Yide and Ding Yanyong (丁衍庸, 1902-1978), who were famous for their attainments in Western art. This exhibition was so popular that its exhibition period was extended and it drew many avant-garde writers as well, such as Xiao Xunmei and Yu Dafu.<sup>564</sup> Besides participating in exhibitions, Xu Beihong was immediately appointed to lectureships at several art schools when he returned to Shanghai in September 1927. He returned to the Chinese University of Art to teach Western painting and theory. In addition, he was invited by Tian Han to teach at the Shanghai University of Art.<sup>565</sup> Later on, Xu Beihong joined Tian Han to establish the South China Art Academy, and soon took professorship at the art faculty of the Central University, which became one of the most prestigious art institutions in the course of modern art education in China.

Xu Beihong's rigorous training in Western realism, brought to public attention by the exposure given to his works in the press, quickly turned him into a new star in the Shanghai art world. Even so, it should be his entry into the exhibition and education areas, significant strands in the fine art realm, that made Xu Beihong an influential figure in China's art field. Xu Beihong's solo exhibition of his drawings and oils during his returned trip in 1926 marked a departure from the commercial taste of his earlier watercolour paintings. His proficiency in Western drawing and oil skills endorsed his new identity as an accomplished artist rather than a commercial painter. More importantly, this new identity provided Xu Beihong with full access to art institutes where he could put his artistic philosophy into practice and have a louder voice with respect to the direction of modern Chinese painting. After settling down in China again in 1927,

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<sup>564</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 228.

<sup>565</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 44.

Xu Beihong was first invited by Chen Baoyi to teach Western painting at the Chinese University of Art. As discussed in Chapter 3.3, Chen Baoyi was among the earliest to promote drawing from nature in Shanghai in the 1910s. Later, in 1921 when he returned to Shanghai after his studies in Japan, Chen Baoyi founded an oil studio and also published a book on how to paint in oils, *Youhua fa zhi jichu* (油畫法之基礎, 'Elementary Techniques of Oil Painting') in 1926.<sup>566</sup> Chen Baoyi's preoccupation with introducing a training programme closer to that followed in Western academies made the Chinese University of Art, of which he was a founding organiser, an avant-garde school in Shanghai in the 1920s. The pivot points in the curriculum at the Chinese University of Art were charcoal drawing and oil painting, marking a new stage of Western art learning in China, departing from the previous phase which had focused on watercolour, pencil drawing and imitation.<sup>567</sup> Life drawing, charcoal drawing and oil painting became the core subjects of learning painting at the new art institutes, such as the National Hangzhou Academy of Art (*Hangzhou guoli yishuyuan* 杭州國立藝術院, later known as the China Academy of Art), headed by Lin Fengmian, and the Art Department of the National Central University, which was under Xu Beihong's leadership.<sup>568</sup> The new and influential art institutes in the late 1920s were largely government-funded and directed by art students returning from Europe, and they followed a curriculum modelled on French art academies. They marked a new age in the spread of Western art in China, that is, the earlier Japanese model of Western learning was replaced by a more authentic and authoritative one. Chinese students were able to learn about Western painting as closely as possible to its origins.

<sup>566</sup> Li, *Zhongguo bainian youhuashi*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>567</sup> Chen, 'Yanhua yundong guocheng lueji', pp. 119-120.

<sup>568</sup> Wu Guanzhong 吳冠中, *Wu Fu Dangqing* 我負丹青, 'I Fall Short of Painting's Expectations' (Beijing, 2004), p. 5.



In this new age, Xu Beihong made many significant contributions. He published catalogues on his own oils and drawings, and also those of French masters, such as Prud'hon.<sup>569</sup> He also mounted several exhibitions displaying paintings, including his own, which directly employed the pictorial language of European art. More importantly, under his leadership, the Art Department of the National Central University became a significant institute in China which loyally transplanted the ethos of the French art academy. It featured rigorous training in drawing, and to this end it was equipped with several classrooms for life drawing, and he ordered plaster-cast copies of masterpieces from France.<sup>570</sup> In 1935, Xu Beihong went further by unifying the University's Western painting group and Chinese painting group into one single 'painting' (*huihua* 繪畫) section. This combination reflected the fact that the disputes over the differences between Western and Chinese paintings in terms of their methods and values which were pervasive in the 1910s in China were at last drawing to an end. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, life drawing was the essential training generally only for Western painting; whereas Chinese painting featured drawing from nature and imitation. Although drawing from nature was also included in the Chinese painting curriculum, it employed different practices from those of Western painting. While the latter emphasised the faithful rendering of the appearance of details of the reality, drawing from nature in Chinese painting meant representing painters' own reflections and philosophies towards nature and towards how the previous masters had used Chinese brushes to paint nature.<sup>571</sup> For Chinese painting, drawing from nature was therefore a practice

<sup>569</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 32 & 40.

<sup>570</sup> Li, *Zhongguo bainian youhuashi*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>571</sup> Wu Jialing 吳嘉陵, *Qingmo mingchu de huihua jiaoyu yu huajia* 清末民初的繪畫教育與畫家, 'Art Education and Painters of the Late Qing and Early Republican Period' (Taipei, 2006), pp. 225-229.

largely derived from imitation and leisure, instead of a technique rooted in verisimilitude. The curriculum of the National School of Fine Art, the first national art school in China, demonstrated these different practices for learning Chinese and Western paintings. Moreover, the Chinese painting practices were also essential for students majoring in other subjects, such as craft and design, and painting and handicraft.<sup>572</sup> By comparison, Xu Beihong's emphasis on life drawing and his merging of the Chinese and Western groups therefore showed his intention to reverse the dominance of Chinese painting practices at art schools and to make drawing and realism essential for Chinese painting as well. The Art Department of the National Central University became Xu Beihong's greatest source of support, allowing him to carry out his artistic ideals and aspirations. It was the fortress of realism in China, and trained up a number of accomplished realist painters, such as Jiang Zhaohe (蔣兆和, 1904-1986), 吳作人 (Wu Zuoren, 1908-1997) and Lü Sibai (呂斯百, 1905-1973), to name but a few. They played a decisive role in continuing Xu Beihong's artistic thoughts and in bridging Academic Realism and Social Realism in the second half of twentieth-century China.<sup>573</sup> Xu Beihong's contributions in rooting realism in the soil of Chinese art through education led to his god-like status and has often overshadowed his endeavours in his artistic creation.

By virtue of his French academic training, Xu Beihong successfully won a reputation as an accomplished Westernised artist. Moreover, through the mass media, Xu Beihong was quickly thrust into the limelight in China's art world. Meanwhile, the flourishing of art associations, schools, exhibitions, and publications demonstrated the ways in which fine art field reached maturity in

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<sup>572</sup> Wu, *Qingmo mingchu de huihua jiaoyu yu huajia*, pp. 123-128.

<sup>573</sup> On Social Realism and twentieth-century Chinese art, see Julia Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1994).

the 1920s. Artists who won their reputation on the ground of their attainments in Western art in the 1920s mostly studied art abroad, artists such as Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, Pang Xunqin and Ni Yide, to name but a few. They developed personal artistic styles modelled on different Western art schools. Therefore, they contributed to the diversity of Western art in China in the 1920s. With the gradual popularity of Western modernist art among the returned artists and the Chinese audience, how to assure his modern image and influence in the art world seemingly became a challenge for Xu Beihong soon after he successfully entered the Shanghai art world in the 1920s. In the first National Art Exhibition, which was held in Shanghai in 1929, Xu Beihong despised the forerunners of modernism, such as Manet, Cézanne, Matisse, and likened the popularity of their art in China to the addiction to opium.<sup>574</sup> Xu Beihong's bitter attack on the modernists revealed his anxiety towards the gradual dominance of Western modernist art in Shanghai's art world, and his aspirations to specify his position in the art field by distinguishing his realist identity from the ambiguous modern and avant-garde image.

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<sup>574</sup> Xu, 'Huo', pp. 131-133.

## Chapter 5 The Appropriation of Realism – The First National Art Exhibition of 1929

### 5.1 Nationalist Discourses

The first National Art Exhibition was held at the *Xinpu* auditorium (新普育堂) in Shanghai from 14 to 30 April 1929.<sup>575</sup> It was claimed that this exhibition had displayed ten thousand works and attracted one hundred thousand spectators.<sup>576</sup> The exhibition consisted of eight sections. The first section featured Chinese painting and calligraphy, in which 1231 individual works were displayed; the second section exhibited 75 works, including artefacts related to seal cutting as well as inscriptions of Chinese ancient bronze and stone tablets; the third exhibited 345 items of Western-style painting; the fourth consisted of 57 pieces of sculpture; the fifth section featured architecture, displaying 34 items including blueprints, pictures and models; the sixth showed 280 pieces of crafts; the seventh displayed 229 photographs. All seven of these sections displayed the works of contemporary Chinese artists.<sup>577</sup> The various categories of the exhibition, from the Western sculptures to the traditional Chinese arts of seal cutting and calligraphy, demonstrated that the loan term *meishu* had developed maturely in China in the late 1920s. In addition to the contemporary part, the eighth section of the exhibition consisted of two categories: foreign art and ancient Chinese painting. The foreign art section featured Japanese paintings, in particular those executed in the Western manner. The ancient Chinese painting

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<sup>575</sup> Wang Yulu 王玉路 and Chen Huijuan 陳慧娟 eds, *Zhonghua minguo quanguo meishu zhanlanhui gailan 1929-2005* 中華民國全國美術展覽會概覽 1929-2005, 'An Overview of the National Art Exhibitions of the Republic of China 1929-2005' (Taipei, 2006), Vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>576</sup> Meng Shouzhuan 孟壽椿, 'Gongxian' 貢獻, 'Contributions', *Meizhan* 美展, 10 (1929), p. 1.

<sup>577</sup> Wang and Chen, *Zhonghua minguo quanguo meishu zhanlanhui gailan 1929-2005*, Vol. I, p. 27. A detailed list of artists and works in the exhibition, see its catalogue, *Meizhan tekan* 美展特刊, 'Special Issue for the National Art Exhibition', 2 vols (Shanghai, 1929). The participating artists and works in the National Art Exhibitions from 1929 until now can be found on the website <http://ed.artc.gov.tw/nae/index.aspx>.

section comprised two subjects: works dating from before the late nineteenth-century, as well as a posthumous exhibition of works by the famed artists in the traditional Chinese painting world of the modern era, such as Chen Shizeng, Jin Cheng and Wu Changshuo (Fig. 142). The ancient Chinese painting section showed thousands of works and thus its scale was the largest in the exhibition. The sheer number of works to be shown was so substantial that its content changed almost everyday.<sup>578</sup> Moreover, the price of a ticket to this part of the exhibition was twice the price of one for the contemporary part.<sup>579</sup> The ancient Chinese painting seems to have drawn the most attention from the audience. Its popularity reflected an interesting phenomenon, suggesting that the market for traditional Chinese painting was still bigger than that for contemporary and Western works, although the Westernised art field of the Republican era had established itself gradually about two decades earlier, as discussed in Chapter 3. This National Art Exhibition, which was mounted by the Education Ministry, demonstrated that art was officially recognised as a legitimate and essential component of China's national and cultural structure. Meng Shouzhuan, the Education Ministry official who was in charge of the exhibition, stated that art was the best form by which to represent the depth of a nation's culture. Art, he claimed, could add glory to China and could enable China to compete with Europe, America and Japan.<sup>580</sup> The lure of traditional Chinese painting thus established itself as playing a significant role in the

<sup>578</sup> Li Yuyi 李寓一, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (I)' 教育部全國美術展覽會參觀記(一), 'A Report of My Visit to the National Art Exhibition Held by the Ministry of Education: I', *Funi* 婦女, 15.7 (1929), pp. 2-7 (p. 5).

<sup>579</sup> Yen Chuan-ying, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao – 1927 nian Taiwan meishu zhanlanhui yu 1929 nian Shanghai quanguo meishu zhanlanhui' 官方美術文化空間的比較 – 1927 年台灣美術展覽會與 1929 年上海全國美術展覽會, 'A Comparative Study in the Official Dimension of Fine Art – The Taiwan Fine Art Exhibition of 1927 and the Shanghai National Fine Art Exhibition of 1929', *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 73.4 (2002), pp. 625-683 (p. 651).

<sup>580</sup> Meng, 'Gongxian', p. 1.

nationalist mission which the government had assigned to art. The persistent charm and power of traditional Chinese painting in the twentieth century, in particular in the light of nationalism, may have contributed to Xu Beihong and other Western-style painters turning to ink painting in their later careers.<sup>581</sup>

Xu Beihong was a member of the committee of the National Art Exhibition.<sup>582</sup> After he moved back to China in the late 1920s, it seemed that he quickly became a new star in China's art world with his accomplishments in Western academic realism, as discussed in Chapter 4. Xu Beihong successfully established his image as a modern, accomplished and Western-style painter. He was then appointed to posts as director or professor at several art schools, such as professor of the Chinese University of Art, the South China Art Academy, and the Art Faculty of the National Central University, and director of the National Beijing Art College.<sup>583</sup> Through several channels, such as institutions, exhibitions, and publishing, Xu Beihong rapidly assumed an active and influential role in China's art field after his return from Europe. As a committee member, Xu Beihong also published a lengthy article, entitled 'Doubts' in the fifth issue of *Meizhan* (美展, 'Art Exhibition'), a special publication accompanying the exhibition, in which he praised the National Art Exhibition in the following items:

An art exhibition is being held for the first time in China. It is a noteworthy and encouraging event that deserves congratulations. What deserves the highest praise, however, is the exclusion of such shameless works as those by Cézanne, Matisse and [Pierre] Bonnard [1867-1949] (except for a couple of pieces displayed as references) (Fig. 143).

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<sup>581</sup> Eugene Wang analysed Xu Beihong's later turn to traditional Chinese painting in the light of the political, nationalist, and global context. See Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', pp. 127-139.

<sup>582</sup> The committee members included Li Yishi, Lin Fengmian, Liu Haisu and Xu Zhimo, to name but a few. Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>583</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, pp. 40-85.

中國有破天荒的全國美術展覽會，可云喜事，值得慶賀，而最可慶賀者，乃在無塞尙 (Cézanne)、馬蒂斯 (Matisse)、薄奈爾 (Bonnard) 等無恥之作(除叁考品中有一二外)。<sup>584</sup>

In the later part of the same article, Xu Beihong explained his denigration of the above-mentioned painters of modern art. He argued:

Despite all their iniquities, the vulgar Manet, the boorish Renoir, the turgid Cézanne, and the inferior Matisse have still managed, with the help of art dealers' manipulation and publicity, to become the sensations of their time, recognised and heeded by the general public. Since World War I, Europe has witnessed a shifting mentality. The dignity of the fine arts has been eroded, while vulgar fashions have become chic trends. Fortunately, all the masterpieces are well preserved, allowing us to view the absolute virtue of the masters of the past. As of today, the competition for survival had become increasingly fierce, leaving little time for profound exploration. This is rather a transient phenomenon not part of the normal course of evolution. If we attempt to model ourselves on depravity, we are no different from the Westerners who attempt to disseminate Chinese scholastic thought in Europe just by studying the books of Dr. Zhang Jingsheng [1889-1970] without delving into the history of the Three Kings and the Five Emperors, or probing the minutiae of Huang Huiru's story as a means of masking their utter bewilderment. Is this not, indeed, ridiculous?

... If the revolutionary government of China would apply its heavenly-endowed resourcefulness to the creation of a great strategy to reveal its notable foresight, it could impose a ten-million-dollar levy on opium and gambling that could fund the construction of an imposing art museum, where works of Cézanne and Matisse could be collected at a cost of three to five thousand dollars per piece and packed into ten large rooms (these artists can produce two pieces within an hour). For the sake of preserving the people's money, this would be no better than purchasing morphine and heroin in transit. Personally, I would rather live secluded and long-haired in the mountains than see any more of these despicable, muddle-headed, dark and corrupted

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<sup>584</sup> Xu, 'Huo', p. 131. For a complete English translation of this article, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 373-374.

elements.

雖以馬奈 (Manet) 之庸，勒奴幻 (Renoir) 之俗，塞尚之浮，馬蒂斯之劣，蹤悉反對方向所有之戀性，而藉賣畫商人之操縱宣傳，亦能震撼一時，昭昭在人耳目。歐洲自大戰以來，心理變易，美術之尊嚴蔽蝕，俗尚竟趨時髦，幸大奇之保存，得見昔人至德。降及今日，生存競爭益烈，無暇治及高深，是乃變象，並非進程非謂遂無進步，顧絕非彼輩。若吾東人尤而效之，則恰同西人欲傳播中國學術于歐土，而所摺載盡係張博士競生之術，五帝三王之史虛無，而刺探黃慧如事蹟綦詳，以掩飾深體糊塗，不可笑耶？

... 若吾國革命政府啓其天從之謀，偉大之記，高瞻遠矚，竟抽烟賭雜稅一千萬元，成立一大規模之美術館，而收羅三五千元一幅之塞尚之畫十大間（彼等之畫一小時可作兩幅）爲民脂民膏計，未見得就好過賣來路貨之嗎啡、海洛因，在我徐悲鴻個人，卻將披髮入山，不願再見此類卑鄙昏曠黑暗墮落也。

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Xu Beihong evaluated the artists of modern art in the light of nationalism by comparing their works to drugs, recalling the large import of opium in the later Qing dynasty, which was the key to China's decline in national power and spirit. Xu Beihong opposed the circulation of Western modern art in China on the ground of its close relationship with commercial activities and popular culture. He denounced modern art on the grounds that its vulgar tendencies had destroyed the great traditions of Western art. To facilitate Chinese readers' understanding, Xu Beihong compared the aforementioned modern artists to Zhang Jingsheng and Huang Huiru. Zhang Jingsheng studied philosophy in France under the work-study scheme from 1912-1919. He was awarded a doctorate by Lyons University for his thesis on Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the French influential thinker of the Enlightenment period. He was also the first translator of Rousseau's *Les Confessions* in China. But it was the publication of *Xingshi* (性史, 'History of Sex') in 1926 that turned him into a

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<sup>585</sup> Xu, 'Huo', pp. 132-133.



sensation. This book was a compilation of several stories which were selected from hundreds of sexual experiences contributed by the public.<sup>586</sup> The book brought Zhang Jingsheng notorious fame, although his contributions were gradually re-evaluated in later scholarship.<sup>587</sup> Huang Huiru came from a rich family. Gossip about her romance with her family's servant was widely circulated in Shanghai. A cigarette brand was even named after her and became popular in the market.<sup>588</sup> Xu Beihong argued that the stories of Zhang Jingsheng and Huang Huiru reflected the vulgar and mentally sick aspects of Chinese society, and thus their popularity would threaten the magnificent orthodoxy of Chinese culture. As a consequence, if their works were circulated in the West, they would mislead Westerners' perception of Chinese culture in the same way that Western modern art had misled Chinese perceptions. Xu Beihong further argued that the virtue of traditional Chinese art lay in its lack of commercial purpose in pursuit of transcendent beauty in art.<sup>589</sup> To protect Chinese art from being tainted by commerce, Xu Beihong thus raised a strong objection to the introduction of Western modern art in China.

Xu Beihong evaluated Western art in terms of the welfare of Chinese art, demonstrating an anxiety about China's future which was pervasive in the literature and art of early twentieth-century China. This 'obsession with China', as C.T. Hsia termed it, drove Chinese intellectuals to search for a resolution to national crises which had been caused by China's defeats in her encounters with

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<sup>586</sup> Zhang Jingsheng, *Xingshi 1926* 性史 1926 (Taipei, 2005).

<sup>587</sup> Peng Xiaoyan 彭小妍, 'Xingqimeng yu ziwo jiefang: Xingboshi Zhang Jingsheng yu Wusi de seyu xiaoshuo' 性启蒙與自我解放: 性博士張競生與五四的色慾小說, 'The Enlightenment of Sex and Self-Liberation: Dr Zhang Jingsheng and the Sexual Novels of the May Fourth', *Dangdai* 當代, 76 (1992), pp. 32-49.

<sup>588</sup> The story of Huang Huiru can be read on the website: <http://past.tianjindaily.com.cn/docroot/200205/09/xb01/09432702.htm>, and <http://past.tianjindaily.com.cn/docroot/200205/10/xb01/10292702.htm>.

<sup>589</sup> Xu, 'Huo', pp. 133-134.

the West after the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>590</sup> The resolution not only introduced a series of concrete reforms in military and education practices in the light of Western models, but also led to the conception of a rhetorical reframing of Chinese culture in a global context. As elaborated in the previous chapters, the pro-Western camp in art advocated reforming Chinese art with Western realistic skills; while the traditional side drew on the abstract tendencies in Western modern art to re-affirm the value of Chinese painting. Although the different camps parted on their attitudes to reforming or preserving Chinese traditions, they converged on their strong nationalist mission to elevate the status of Chinese art in the world. This nationalist attitude towards the future of Chinese art not only continued in Xu Beihong's artistic thoughts after he returned from Europe, but was still rife in the National Art Exhibition.

The nationalist perspective in Meng Shouzhuang's article, by which art was expected to represent national character and strengthen national power, was echoed in other reports and articles about the exhibition. In an article entitled *Quanguo meizhan suofu de shiming* (全國美展所負的使命, 'The Mission of the National Art Exhibition'), the exhibition was assigned to project the great national spirit of China. The author Xu Shiqi (許士騏, 1901-1993), who studied Western painting in the Shanghai Art Academy, claimed that the art exhibition would lay the foundation for a Chinese Renaissance movement.<sup>591</sup> Zheng Taixi (鄭太息) in an article to call for paintings stated that the art exhibition was an important means to show to the world our great culture and by which to elevate our nation's status. He also stressed that Western art originated in Italy, while

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<sup>590</sup> Hsia, 'Obsession with China', p. 536.

<sup>591</sup> Xu Shiqi, 'Quanguo meizhan suofu de shiming', *Meizhen* 6 (1929), p. 7. Xu Shiqi first studied art at the Shanghai Art Academy. He went to study art in Paris in the 1930s. Later, he established his reputation as a traditional Chinese painter. See Yun, *Minguo shuhuaqia huizhuan*, p. 215.

Oriental art began in China. Hence, contemporary Chinese artists should take the responsibility of rejuvenating the significance of Chinese art in the world.<sup>592</sup>

This comparison between Chinese art and the art of the Italian Renaissance was a consensus among reform-minded intellectuals, including Kang Youwei, Cai Yuanpei and Chen Duxiu, as discussed in Chapter 2.4. This comparative perspective was very obvious in the National Art Exhibition. Another committee member, Lin Fengmian, who was appointed by Cai Yuanpei as the administrator of the Art Education Council of the Education Ministry and as the main organizer of the National Art Exhibition, demonstrated his high hopes for art by proclaiming that “art should take the primary position in the Chinese Renaissance just as it did in the Italian Renaissance” in the statement ‘A Letter to the National Art Field’ in 1927.<sup>593</sup> In this statement, Lin Fengmian also apologised for having been self-contained in his past career and reminded artists not to forget the educational and social responsibility of art.<sup>594</sup>

The Chinese Renaissance projected the great hopes of China’s art world for the creation of a golden age of Chinese culture in the modern era. Moreover, it reflected the ethnographic implications in the perception of Chinese intellectuals of their own culture in a global context in the twentieth century.<sup>595</sup> The comparative view of Chinese art was also manifest in the fact that the National Art Exhibition was compared both to the French Salon and to Japanese *Teiten* (帝展, ‘Imperial Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition’).<sup>596</sup> Feng Zikai, in the article, *Duiyu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui de xiwang* (對於全國美術展覽會的希望,

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<sup>592</sup> Zheng Taixi, ‘Jinggao buyuan chupinzhe’ 敬告不願出品者, ‘An Announcement to Those Who Hesitate to Contribute Their Works’, *Meizhan*, 3 (1929). p.4.

<sup>593</sup> Lin, ‘Zhi quanguo yishujie shu’, p. 175.

<sup>594</sup> Lin, ‘Zhi quanguo yishujie shu’, p. 172.

<sup>595</sup> Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p. 239.

<sup>596</sup> The first government-sponsored art exhibition was open in Japan in 1907, which was called *Bunten* (文展, ‘Ministry of Education Fine Arts Exhibition’). It was renamed as *Teiten* in 1911, as the Imperial Art Academy took over as the organising authority. For a brief account of Japanese exhibitions of the twentieth century, see the website, <http://www.kagedo.com/notes.shtml>.

'Hopes for the National Art Exhibition'), stated that he hoped that the National Art Exhibition would be held annually and become China's Salon.<sup>597</sup> Li Yuyi, in his detailed report on the National Art Exhibition which was published in the special issue of *Funü* magazine in July 1929, praised the fact that the exhibition could bear comparison with the Salon and *Teiten*.<sup>598</sup>

The large scale of the art exhibition was demonstrated not only in the considerable number of works on display, but also in the comprehensive knowledge of Western and Japanese art published in the magazines at the time. For the National Art Exhibition, *Funü* magazine published a special issue in July 1929, in which it provided detailed reports on the National Art Exhibition as well as introducing a variety of French and Japanese exhibitions and the latest trends in Western art. For example, Li Yuyi published a detailed report on the National Art Exhibition in which he provided a wide range of information, including the purpose of the exhibition, the arrangement of the exhibition space, and brief accounts of the works and the artists of each section of the exhibition.<sup>599</sup> Song Yao (頌堯) analysed the exhibited works in the Western painting section and the Western art schools that influenced Chinese artists.<sup>600</sup> *Funü* magazine also gave a detailed account of the women artists who participated in the exhibition.<sup>601</sup> Moreover, it also introduced the different Salons of France, new Western architecture, Japan's *Teiten* and the relatively radical *Inten* (院展, 'Japan Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition').<sup>602</sup> Jin Weijun pointed out the conflicting

<sup>597</sup> Feng Zikai, 'Duiyu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui de xiwang', *Meizhan*, 1 (1929), pp. 4-5 (p. 5).

<sup>598</sup> Li, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (I)', p. 2.

<sup>599</sup> The detailed report Li Yuyi published in the July 1929 issue of *Funü* magazine was divided into 4 parts.

<sup>600</sup> Song Yao, 'Xiyang huapai xitong yu meizhan xihua pingshu' 西洋畫派系統與美展西畫評述, 'The Analysis of Western Painting Schools and Western-style Paintings in the National Art Exhibition', *Funü*, 15.7 (1929), pp. 41-45.

<sup>601</sup> 'Nüqingnian yishujia' 女青年藝術家, 'Young Women Artists', *Funü*, 15.7 (1929), pp. 6-29.

<sup>602</sup> For example, Li Yuyi, 'Ribei zuida meizhan zhiyi - Dizhan' 日本最大美展之一 - 帝展,

forces in the French art field when she introduced the emergence of different Salons in France.<sup>603</sup> Li Yuyi compared Post-impressionism to the contemporary part of the National Art Exhibition, which marked a new stage of Chinese art.<sup>604</sup> The special issue of *Funi* magazine demonstrated the more radical and avant-garde aspect of China's art world in comparison to the exhibition's accompanying publication, *Meizhan*, which was more concerned with art's influence upon society and upon people's lives. Moreover, many of the *Meizhan* contributors were active in the field of traditional Chinese painting, such as Zheng Wuchang (鄭午昌, 1894-1952), Yu Jianhua (俞劍華, 1895-1979), He Tianjian (賀天健, 1890-1977) and Huang Binhong, to name but a few. Both magazines represented the vigour and diversity of China's art field in the late 1920s. Moreover, they also demonstrated that even though China's art field was growing more and more mature and diversified in the 1920s, nationalism still remained a significant force in it.

Nationalism served as the reason for Xu Beihong's dismissal of the forerunners of Western modern art. To make his provocative argument convincing, Xu Beihong listed Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin, Monet and Eugène Anatole Carrière (1849-1906), who were active contemporaneously with Matisse and Cézanne, as the authentic masters of French modern art.<sup>605</sup> This list reveals the profound influence of French academic art on Xu Beihong because Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin and Carrière were all members of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, a conservative association which aimed to preserve the great

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'The Largest Art Exhibition of Japan: I – Teiten', *Funi*, 15.7 (1929), p. 7. Li Yuyi, 'Ribei zuida meizhan zhier – Yuanzhan' 日本最大美展之二 – 院展, 'The Largest Art Exhibition of Japan: II – Inten', *Funi*, 15.7 (1929), p. 8. Jin Weijun 金偉君, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong' 美展與藝術運動, 'Art Exhibitions and Art Movements', *Funi*, 15.7 (1929), pp. 21-24.

<sup>603</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong'.

<sup>604</sup> Li, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (I)', p. 2.

<sup>605</sup> Xu, 'Huo', p. 133.

traditions of French art, as discussed in Chapter 4. Puvis de Chavannes and Rodin are often considered to be modern artists because their works reveal the abstract tendencies of modern painting; meanwhile, they still maintained a close relationship with the French academy and a certain level of respect for traditions. Hence, in terms of modernist artists, they were not as representative as Manet or Cézanne, because their attitude towards traditional authority was not so critical.<sup>606</sup> Xu Beihong argued that, with the help of commercial manipulation, the vulgarity of Matisse, Cézanne, Renoir and Bonnard overpowered the splendour of French art, which was contributed by such artists as Prud'hon, Ingres, Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Courbet, Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin, Dagnan-Bouveret, Bastien-Lepage, Paul Baudry (French academic painter, 1828-1886), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Monet and others. This long list of artists who are worthy of credit in Xu Beihong's eyes represents of a variety of schools. Monet and Degas are categorised into Impressionism, as are Renoir and Cézanne; Manet and Courbet are both Realists. However, Xu Beihong's opposite opinions on their accomplishments reveal that his view of French art is self-contradictory. As revealed in Chapter 4, Xu Beihong's reading of Western art demonstrates his penchant for realism and the influence of French academic aesthetics. Moreover, his version of realism is more concerned with technical virtuosity than with any specific painting school, a view which is also manifest here. Most of the listed artists are either academic painters or those held in high esteem in the Academy. Courbet, Monet and Degas are of the forerunners of modern Western art, as are Manet and Cézanne. However, they were praised by Xu Beihong perhaps because to a certain level they retained the correct contours of the depicted

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<sup>606</sup> Clement Greenberg's article 'Modernist Painting' was monumental in the formation of the discursive framework of modernist art. See Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood eds, *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideals* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 754-760.

objects in their works (Fig. 126). They did not reveal in their works as strong a tendency to deform as Cézanne did (Fig. 143); neither did they take as bitter a critical attitude towards traditions as Manet (Fig. 128).<sup>607</sup>

At a time when Western art was being comprehensively introduced into China, Xu Beihong's condemnation of the modernist painters appeared to be an anachronism. 'Doubts' has often been cited with reference to Xu Beihong's artistic stance and the publication played a decisive role in defining his image as an old-fashioned and rigid Realist.<sup>608</sup> Moreover, in the ever-growing popular discursive context among scholars, in which the self-referential expression of traditional Chinese painting is considered to be consistent with the non-figurative tendencies of Western modern art, Xu Beihong's realistic painting as the ideal model of modern Chinese art is often questioned.<sup>609</sup> Nonetheless, some scholars have argued that Xu Beihong's insistence on realism responded to the call for a return to classical traditions and mimesis practices in the West after the devastation brought about by World War I.<sup>610</sup> Xu Beihong's condemnation of the modernist artists for their close relationship with commercial art dealers also heightened a historical fact in the French art world at the turn of the twentieth century. It revealed the conflicting agencies and institutions in the French art field.<sup>611</sup> The victory of modernist artists and art dealers eroded the authority of the Salon and the Academy, dominating the direction of Western modern art. So

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<sup>607</sup> Cézanne was a significant figure who bridged the visual truth of Impressionism and the intrinsic reality of art, the point of departure of Western modern art in the twentieth century. On Cézanne's art and his relationship with Impressionism, see Richard Schiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago, 1986).

<sup>608</sup> David Der-wei Wang analysed Xu Beihong's 'Huo' and the National Art Exhibition in detail and criticised the precision of Xu Beihong's reading of Western realism. See Wang, 'In the Name of the Real'.

<sup>609</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency'.

<sup>610</sup> Chou and Wu, '1920 ji 30 niandai Zhongguo huajia fu Bali xihua hou dui Shanghai yitan de yingxiang', p. 37. On the nostalgia for the classical and realistic order after World War I, see Briony Fer *et al.* eds, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. 9-17.

<sup>611</sup> Mainardi, *The End of the Salon*.

Xu Beihong was not really 'blind to all European painting after 1880' as Michael Sullivan has criticised.<sup>612</sup> He just stood for the academic side, in opposition to the main direction of Western art.

In addition to the nationalist consideration, Xu Beihong's attack on the modernist artists may have resulted from his anxiety about the increasing popularity of modern art in China's art world. *Funii* magazine, which served as the biggest space for reports and criticisms of Western art in the National Art Exhibition, was filled with information about modern art, in particular Impressionism and Post-impressionism. For example, Li Yuyi used Post-impressionism to describe the new stage of Chinese art introduced by the National Art Exhibition.<sup>613</sup> Some critics revealed a few regrets about the apparent reduction in the number of works in the Impressionist and Post-impressionist styles in the National Art Exhibition.<sup>614</sup> An exhibition, which was organised by Lin Fengmian and held in Shanghai in May 1929, only one month after the National Art Exhibition, was seen as a complement to the government-backed exhibition as it displayed works in the style of Post-impressionism and the more avant-garde Expressionism.<sup>615</sup> Before Xu Beihong went to Paris, the Italian Renaissance was regarded as the model of Western art in China. After he returned to Shanghai, Impressionism and even more radical artistic trends were filling China's art world. There seemed little space left for Xu Beihong's realism and academic aesthetics. Therefore, Xu Beihong posed a provocative gesture in the National Art Exhibition by

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<sup>612</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 72.

<sup>613</sup> Li, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (I)', p. 2.

<sup>614</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong', p. 24.

<sup>615</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong', p. 24. On Lin Fengmian's artistic activities and thoughts in the late 1920s, see Liu Jui-kuan 劉瑞寬, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she' 《亞波羅》與藝術運動社, 'Apollo and The Society of Art Movement', *Xingda lishi xuebao* 興大歷史學報, 14 (2006), pp. 105-132.



withdrawing from the concrete exhibition space and publishing 'Doubts' to proclaim his objection to the importing of Western modern art. As discussed in Chapter 4, Xu Beihong made several speeches to promote the significance of realism in 1926, which helped to rapidly establish his reputation. He was seen as an avant-garde artist rather than a rigid realist painter at that time. Nonetheless, his resentful attitude over the National Art Exhibition endowed him with a distinct image of an agent of Western realism. It demonstrated Xu Beihong's anxieties and aspirations to creating his unique position in China's art field. Xu Beihong did not exhibit any paintings in the National Art Exhibition. Nevertheless, in a report which provided an account of Western painting schools and analysed their influence on the participating artists, Xu Beihong was also mentioned as a realist artist, among other participating realist painters, such as Li Yishi and Pan Yuliang (Figs 82 & 144).<sup>616</sup>

'Doubts' provoked enthusiastic reactions. Xu Zhimo published a lengthy article, entitled *Wo ye huo* (我也惑, 'I Have Doubts, Too'), in the fifth and sixth issues of *Meizhan*.<sup>617</sup> This article is about six times longer than 'Doubts' and makes Xu Zhimo the loudest voice against Xu Beihong's hatred for the modernist painters. Xu Beihong reacted by publishing the article, *Huo zhi bu jie* (惑之不解, 'Unresolved Doubts') in the ninth and supplementary issues.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, Li Yishi also contributed an article, entitled *Wo bu huo* (我不惑, 'I Have No Doubts') in the eighth issue.<sup>619</sup> Yang Qingqing wrote *Huo hou xiaoyan* (惑後小言, 'A Comment after the Doubts') to bring a conclusion to this dispute. Yang approved of 'Doubts' for evoking renewed enthusiasm for art among

<sup>616</sup> Song, 'Xiyang huapai xitong yu meizhan xihua pingshu', p. 42.

<sup>617</sup> Xu Zhimo, 'Wo ye huo', *Meizhan*, 5 (1929), pp. 2-4; and 6 (1929), pp. 1-3. And also in Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 25-29. All articles surrounding the subject 'Doubts' are also published in Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 22-30.

<sup>618</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Huo zhi bu jie', *Meizhan*, 9 (1929), pp. 1-3; and *Meizhan*, supplement (1929), p. 1. This article is also in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 135-145.

<sup>619</sup> Li Yishi, 'Wo bu huo', *Meizhan* 8 (1929), pp. 1-2; also in Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 29-30.

artists.<sup>620</sup>

Xu Zhimo argued that Xu Beihong should not attempt to impose upon the creation of art a moral discipline, and further implied that Xu Beihong's standard for art was old-fashioned and personal. He argued:

You are a passionate man of the ancient way, a rare breed in the world of today. Judging by your distrust of flattery, and the integrity and civility you show in your dealings with others or in your handling of artistic matters. You are not a man of this modern age. Behind your words and deeds are your firm and unique standards of beauty and virtue.... Your ancient way and your stern, your moral disposition can be likened to a Buddha seated regally on a lotus platform, resting upon your fervour, displaying an air of infallibility.

你是一個 — 現世上不多見的 — 熱情的古道人。就你不輕阿附，不論在人事上或在繪事上的氣節與風格言，你不是一個今人。在你的言行的背后，你堅強的抱守著你獨有的美與德的準繩。... 你的古道，你的嚴謹的道德的性情，有如一尊佛，危然跌坐在你熱情的蓮座上，指示著一個不可錯誤的態度。<sup>621</sup>

Xu Zhimo stated that the standard of art should lie in "an independent artistic version".<sup>622</sup> Xu Zhimo defended Cézanne in the light of this standard and proclaimed that Cézanne was a real artist. Li Yishi in the article 'I Have No Doubts' tried to mediate between the opposing positions taken by Xu Beihong and Xu Zhimo on the question of Western modern art. Li Yishi argued that the dispute between the two Xus lay in their different attitudes towards art judgement. In Li Yishi's opinion, Xu Beihong's attitude was that of an artist and thus was subjective; whereas Xu Zhimo's stance was that of a critic and therefore relatively neutral.<sup>623</sup> However, in terms of art's educational responsibility, Li Yishi stood for Xu Beihong. He argued:

<sup>620</sup> Yang Qingqing, 'Huo hou xiaoyan', *Meizhan*, supplement (1929), p. 1.

<sup>621</sup> Xu Zhimo, 'Wo ye huo', in Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 25-29 (pp. 25-26). For a complete English translation, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 374-376.

<sup>622</sup> Xu, 'Wo ye huo', p. 27.

<sup>623</sup> Li, 'Wo bu huo', p. 29.

Given my experience as a practitioner of Western painting for more than twenty years, I still cannot figure out the works of Cézanne and Matisse. Were my son to learn from them, I would give him a good beating and forbid him to continue. Because I take charge of my son's education, I cannot decide my behaviour separately from my subjectivity. Therefore, I would say subjectively that I agree wholeheartedly with Xu Beihong's attitude.

塞尚、馬蒂斯的作品，我研究了二十多年的洋畫，實在還有點不懂。假若說：我的兒子要學他們的畫風，我簡直要把他重重地打一頓，禁止他學他們，因為我對我的兒子負指示他的責任，我不得不憑我的主觀來決定我的行為。所以我憑我主觀說：我是極端贊同悲鴻先生的態度。<sup>624</sup>

Li Yishi further suggested that the two Xus should consider our society before judging art, because artists should also take on social responsibilities. In this light, the works of the modernist painters who were influenced by commercial manipulation and avant-garde intention would not be suitable for circulation in China before Western art traditions were fully introduced.<sup>625</sup> Li Yishi had won his artistic reputation with his realistic paintings, such as *Changhenge huayi* (長恨歌畫意, 'Representation of the Song of Everlasting Sorrow', 1929), which was exhibited in the National Art Exhibition (Fig. 145). Like Xu Beihong, he emphasised the importance of the realistic skills of Western painting to reform Chinese art. In another article, entitled *Xuexi xiyanghua de mubiao* (學習西洋畫的目標, 'The Goals of Learning Western Painting'), which was published in the July 1929 issue of *Funi* magazine, Li Yishi pointed out that the aim of learning Western painting was to polish an artist's pictorial ability. Moreover, he pointed out, a person who promoted art in modern China had to possess a knowledge of both Chinese and Western art so that he could protect the national essence on the one hand while on the other hand, he would know which kind of Western art was

<sup>624</sup> For an English translation, see Fong, *Between Two Cultures*, p.38.

<sup>625</sup> Li, 'Wo bu huo', pp. 29-30.

the best to improve Chinese art.<sup>626</sup> Li Yishi shared with Xu Beihong the nationalist perspective on art, which put priority on art's social responsibilities. Li Yishi was not the only person who approved of Xu Beihong's point of view. Yang Qingqing also agreed with Xu Beihong that it was artists' duty to correct those of their fellows who strayed onto the wrong creative paths.<sup>627</sup>

Both Li Yishi and Yang Qingqing were leading committee members of the National Art Exhibition. Yang Qingqing was also the chief editor of *Meizhan* and Li Yishi took charge of recruiting the exhibited works. Li Yishi's favour for realism may in part have contributed to the large number of realistic works on display in the Western-style painting section of the National Art Exhibition. Their endorsement of Xu Beihong demonstrated the force of nationalism in China's art field. Li Yishi's painting *Kexue yu meishu* (科學與美術, 'Science and Fine Arts') was seen as the best example to represent the spirit of the National Art Exhibition. The painting depicted a nude goodness standing on a rock, below which was a pit in which many workers were hard at work.<sup>628</sup> This picture revealed the importance of a material basis for art. The juxtaposition of art and science echoed Cai Yuanpei's advocacy of using scientific methods to study fine art, which he had delivered to the Beijing University Painting Research Society in 1919.<sup>629</sup> Cai Yuanpei was the key person behind the mounting of the official art exhibition. He had strived to organise a National Art Exhibition as early as 1922, and the exhibition became possible when he was appointed Minister of Education of the Nationalist government in 1927.<sup>630</sup> The National Art Exhibition saw the fulfilment of Cai Yuanpei's aspirations of combining science and art to

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<sup>626</sup> Li Yishi, 'Xuexi Xiyanghua de mubiao', *Funi*, 15.7 (1929), pp. 33-34.

<sup>627</sup> Yang, 'Huo hou xiaoyan', p. 1.

<sup>628</sup> Li, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (I)', p. 3.

<sup>629</sup> Cai, 'Zai Beijing daxue huafa yanjiuhui shang de yanshuoci', p. 86.

<sup>630</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', pp. 630-634.

create an accomplished modern Chinese civilisation. The emphasis on a scientific attitude towards art demonstrated nationalist implications, because science had been seen as the essential means to save the weak China in the modern era after the later Qing dynasty. Art, which had been assigned by Cai Yuanpei to replace the Confucian traditions to represent the main body of new Republican culture, was thus unavoidably intertwined with nationalism. When studying the structure of the literary field of twentieth-century China, Michel Hockx argues that it cannot be analysed solely through the two conflicting principles of autonomy and heteronomy, which were the two factors which operated the French literary field. China's literary field comprises three principles: the autonomous, the heteronomous and the 'utilisation of the people', i.e. cultural capital, economic capital and political capital.<sup>631</sup> This same phenomenon is also manifest in China's art field. In the late 1920s, China's art field was increasingly maturing and flourishing. More and more art schools and societies were set up; art newspapers and journals were frequently published; artists demonstrated more and more freedom in their creation; the styles and media of art works appeared more and more diversified. Meanwhile, art's nationalist role became a primary objective. Xu Beihong's dismissal of the modernist painters' commercial manipulation and his objection to their circulation in China in terms of the welfare of the Chinese people helped to raise his status in the art field due to the increase in the influence of the cultural and political capital. In retrospect, Xu Beihong's condemnation of Western modern art in the twentieth century seems to have been an anachronism. However, his artistic perspective, which responded to the nationalist context of modern Chinese art, made him rapidly become a principle agent in China's art field.

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<sup>631</sup> Hockx, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China*, pp. 12-14.

## 5.2 The Appropriation of the Real (*Zhen*)

Xu Beihong published 'Doubts' to respond Xu Zhimo's request for his participation in the National Art Exhibition. Although Xu Beihong was a committee member, he refused to exhibit his paintings to protest against the formalist dominance of the exhibition.<sup>632</sup> Xu Zhimo's rejoinder to Xu Beihong's bitter criticism of modern painters has often been drawn on to enhance the conservative stereotype of Xu Beihong's realist image.<sup>633</sup> Xu Zhimo criticised Xu Beihong's view of art as having moral and nationalist connotations for being outdated. He only approved of Xu Beihong's high moral principles in terms of the pursuit of the real (*zhen*) in art. Taking the real as the point of departure, Xu Zhimo eloquently defended Western modern art in the article, 'I Have Doubts, Too'.

First, Xu Zhimo argued that Xu Beihong raised the wrong moral principles for judging art's reality. He argued:

Art is autonomous, but if there is room for a moral concept in any criticism on artistic matters, only one concept, and I think you will definitely agree, is permissible: the distinction between the real and the fake.... However, when it comes to the assessment of works of art, the boundary between the real and the fake, important as it is, cannot be gauged solely by empirical experience, nor can it be demarcated through pure intuition. Of course, by the terms 'real' and 'fake', I am referring to the thought and intent expressed by an artist through his works and not to the authenticity that an expert in antiques may seek to establish in authenticating an artefact.

藝術是獨立的；如果關於藝術的批評可以容納一個道德性的觀念，那就只許有——我想你一定可以同意——一個真與偽的辨認。... 但在藝術品評上，真與偽的界限，雖則是最關重要，卻不是單憑經驗也不是純恃直覺所能完全剖析的。我這裡所說的真偽當然是指一個作家在他的作品裡所表現的意趣與志

<sup>632</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 59.

<sup>633</sup> For example, Wang, 'In the Name of the Real'.

向，不是指鑑古家的辨別作品的真假。<sup>634</sup>

In the light of the autonomous nature of art, Xu Zhimo objected to Xu Beihong's nationalist perspective. Since art enjoys freedom of creation, its style may appear different from the tradition, such as the quick and unfinished brushwork of the modernists. Meanwhile, the fickle nature of human interest made people prefer the new style of the modern painters and thus contributed to the success of modern painting in the market. In this light, Xu Zhimo disagreed with Xu Beihong's criticism of the modern painters for the way that they manipulated the commercial market. Moreover, Xu Zhimo argued that Xu Beihong's condemnation of modern painters in protection of the real only revealed his 'real indignation' (*fenkai de zhencheng* 憤慨的真誠). This anger derived from the traditional and thorough training that Xu Beihong had received from the Academy. Xu Zhimo compared Xu Beihong's hatred of modernist painting to the traditional scholars' scorn for Hu Shi's vernacular writing and pointed out that Xu Beihong's perspective was emotional and conservative.<sup>635</sup>

To avoid such biases against Western modern art, Xu Zhimo suggested 'an independent artistic vision'. He argued:

In our evaluation of art, isn't it true that the most important criteria should be an independent artistic vision and a little pure, artistic feeling? What is an artist? Isn't he someone who desires to express, through painting or sculpture, a certain spiritual experience uniquely his own? Technique has its place, and knowledge its use. However, with only technique and knowledge, an artist – no matter how skilled – cannot create that which you and I would consider works of pure art. After all, isn't it true that what you and I have been seeking, in art as well as in our daily life, is a certain original spiritual expression, or a certain noble essence of life?

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<sup>634</sup> Xu, 'Wo ye huo', p. 26. For English translation, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 374-375.

<sup>635</sup> Xu, 'Wo ye huo', p. 27.

我們共同批判的標準還不是一個不依傍的真純的藝術的境界與一點真純的藝術的感覺？什麼叫做一個美術家，除是他憑著繪畫的或塑造的形象要表現他獨自感受到的某種靈性的經驗？技巧有它的地位，知識也有它的用處，但單憑任何高深的技巧與知識，一個作家不能造作出你我可以承認的純藝術的作品。你我在藝術裡正如你我在人事裡競競然尋求的，還不是一些新鮮的精神的流露，一些高貴生命的晶華？<sup>636</sup>

In Xu Zhimo's opinion, an independent artistic vision would take a more neutral attitude towards art judgment and would thus be able to discern the sincerity of artists under their various painting styles. Taking Cézanne as an example, Xu Zhimo argued that Cézanne's sincerity, which was manifest in his insistence on creating his personal style and on painting for over fifty years, was crystallised in the bold brushwork of his work. Moreover, an independent artistic attitude would avoid falling into the polarised reactions to Cézanne's work as happened in the late-nineteenth century French art world. From Xu Zhimo's point of view, the most important component of a real artist was his sincerity, and this can be only judged by an independent artistic vision rather than by traditional conventions, techniques, and nationalism.

Xu Zhimo's 'I Have Doubts, Too' prompted Xu Beihong's eloquent article, 'Unresolved Doubts', in which Xu Beihong gave 'the real' a different definition. He argued:

In my opinion, I would refer to the real and the fake in your terms as the right and the wrong (*shifei* 是非). There is the word 'resonance' (*yun* 韻) in the literary and artistic world which excludes the existence of right and wrong. In the meantime, there also exists the word illumination (*ming* 明), therefore, the distinction between the real and the fake should not be blurred. A puppet cannot be a real person. Can we not tell the real from the fake? Warlord politics is not republicanism. Can we not distinguish the real and the fake? With regard to the elements of

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<sup>636</sup> Xu, 'Wo ye huo', p. 27. For a English translation, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, p. 376.



plastic art, form is the first and colour comes the second. What I cannot dismiss is the kind of art in which form exists.... I want to pose a question: does form exist in the works of those trifling schools of art? If not, can they be worthy of art?

兄所指之真偽，弟意以爲是是非。文藝上既有韻之一字，則無是非；同時又有一明字，則真偽應不容混淆。傀儡登場，不能視之爲人，焉云不能定真偽？軍閥政治，不得爲共和，焉云不能定真偽？藝 *Art plastique* 之原素，爲 *Forme*，色次之，果之不爲弟棄者，以其形之存也。...何所謂形？形既不存，何云乎藝？！<sup>637</sup>

In terms of the 'real' in art, Xu Beihong provided a different perspective from Xu Zhimo. For Xu Zhimo, a real piece of art represented an artist's sincerity, which had nothing to do with the social or political ethos; whereas Xu Beihong insisted that the educative role was the route that the real art should take. Moreover, Xu Zhimo thought that an artist should enjoy freedom of creation; while Xu Beihong argued that a real piece of art was based on its form-likeness.

With regard to sincerity, Xu Beihong once defined it from a different angle from that taken by Xu Zhimo. In 1927, Xu Beihong participated in the Associated Art Exhibition which was organised by various art schools and societies of Shanghai, such as the Chinese University of Art, Xinhua Art Academy (*Xinhua yishu zhuanke xuexiao* 新華藝術專科學校), the Dawn Society of Fine Arts and others.<sup>638</sup> Xu Beihong was invited to comment on the exhibition and so published the article, *Meishu lianhe zhanlanhui jilue* (美術聯合展覽會記略, 'A Short Remark on the Associated Art Exhibition'), in which he demonstrated his strict standards of realism as a standpoint for art judgement through his definition of sincerity. Xu Beihong argued that sincerity (*zhenshuai* 真率) was the cure for the current decadent atmosphere in the art world. He had come to this conclusion after visiting the exhibition:

<sup>637</sup> Xu, 'Huo zhi bujie', p. 135.

<sup>638</sup> Wang, *Ershi shiji Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, p. 228. A brief account of this exhibition is also mentioned in Chapter 4.3.

At this moment when art is growing decadent, sincerity can help the artist who wants to rectify the shallow fashion and ameliorate his own art. The beauty of artworks lies in the form instead of the colour. Abandoning the form in pursuit of the colour only touches on the superficial appearance. Michelangelo said: "A good painting must represent the sculpture-like effect". Therefore, [an artist] should depict an object's form thoroughly in order to reach the level of nobility and magnificence. On the contrary, if he only pursues beautiful colour and expressive brushwork, he will represent a trivial style in his work. Accordingly, he cannot approach the Way of art throughout his life due to a lack of sincerity.

當此文藝衰頹之際，欲藥澆風而自振拔者，真率 Sincerite 其爲功乎。藝事之美，在形象而不在色澤；取色彩而捨形象，是皮相也。米開朗基羅有言曰：「佳畫必近乎雕刻。」故務盡形之性，庶足躋乎華貴高妙之域；徒任色澤之繁郁，而放縱奔逸，是所謂浮滑，終身由之而不得入于道者：是無誠之果也。<sup>639</sup>

While Xu Zhimo referred to sincerity as an artist's true feelings, Xu Beihong thought of sincerity as form. For Xu Beihong, an artist's sincerity should be embodied in his precise rendering of the portrayed objects' contours. Sincerity for Xu Zhimo was a relatively personal and free way of expression; whereas it was seen by Xu Beihong as an absolute principle for the creation of art. Xu Beihong's opinions in this article of 1927 anticipated his later more serious attack on Western modern art in the 'Doubts' of 1929.

As regards the difference between resonance (*yun*) and form, Xu Beihong further clarified it in a later article, *Dangqian Zhongguo zhi yishu wenti* (當前中國之藝術問題, 'The Current Problems of Chinese Art', 1947). Xu Beihong argued:

It has been said while Chinese art values spirit-resonance, Western art emphasises form-likeness, not knowing that both form-likeness and spirit-resonance are a matter of technique. While spirit represents the essence of form-likeness, resonance

<sup>639</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Meishu lianhe zhanlanhui jilue', in Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 20-21 (p. 21).

comes with the transformation of form-likeness. Thus for someone who excels in form-likeness, it is not hard to achieve spirit-resonance.

有人喜言中國藝術重神韻，西歐藝術重形象，不知形象與神韻，均為技法；神者，乃形象之精華；韻者，乃形象之變態。能精於形象，自不難求得神韻。<sup>640</sup>

For Xu Beihong, *yun* and spiritual expression, the forms of sincerity in Xu Zhimo's opinion were both rooted in form-likeness. At the beginning of this article, Xu Beihong directly pointed out that both science and art pursued the real (*qiuzhen* 求真). Xu Beihong's view of art remained the pro-Western approach to rejuvenating Chinese culture, which was modelled on the advanced material culture of the West. As discussed in the previous chapters, this intellectual approach to national crises had exerted a profound influence on Xu Beihong after his association with Kang Youwei and the May Fourth intelligentsia in the 1910s, and it seemed to maintain its influence throughout Xu Beihong's life.

According to Xu Beihong's perspective on the real, Cézanne's new style of painting was categorised into the work of *yun*, which first required a grounding in form-likeness. Therefore, Xu Beihong disagreed with Xu Zhimo's defence of Cézanne. He argued that Cézanne's non-figurative brushwork only demonstrated his lack of technical proficiency to represent his ideas, although his artistic feeling was sincere.<sup>641</sup> To stress the importance of realistic skills in an artist's creation, Xu Beihong further invoked the philosophy of the French critic Hyppolyte Taine (1828-1893) to describe the two stages of creation that an artist would go through. He argued:

An artist's accomplishments consist of two stages. The first stage of his work reveals the effects of verisimilitude. Later on, as the artist grows more skilled, the sense of reality will be able to be

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<sup>640</sup> Xu Beihong, *Dangqian Zhongguo zhi yishu wenti*, in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenjie*, pp. 533-537 (p. 535). The English translation, see Fong, *Between Two Cultures*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>641</sup> Xu, 'Huo zhi bujie', pp. 143-44.

thoroughly expressed though his work is not modelled on the concrete world.

曰藝人之致力，恆分二期，初期悉爲真之感覺，逮經驗漸豐，則由意造，而真意漓。<sup>642</sup>

This statement, which was based on Taine's perspective, continued Xu Beihong's formulation of realism in his speeches delivered in 1926, as discussed in Chapter 4. For Xu Beihong, form is the pivotal component of the art of the 'real', and the moral principle for art. In 1931, Xu Beihong published an article to introduce a drawing of Ingres which he had come across in Paris. He quoted Ingres' saying, '*Le dessin est la probité de l'art*' (Drawing is the probity of art) to stress the priority of form in art.<sup>643</sup> Xu Beihong translated *probite* into the Chinese term *zhencao* (貞操, 'morality' or 'chastity'). Moreover, he argued that China's regression was as a result of her lack of this virtue.

Since art's morality was form, it can be understood why Xu Beihong used such an emotional word as 'shameless' to abuse Western modern painting. Ingres's comment demonstrated the profound influence of the classical training of French art on Xu Beihong.<sup>644</sup> In the article *Xinguohua jianli de buzou* (新國畫建立的步驟, 'The Steps of the Establishment of New National Painting', 1947), Xu Beihong praised the development of Chinese painting over the previous two decades, during which quite a few proficient artists in realism had appeared. This progress should be attributed to the promotion of drawing in China's art world, because drawing was the basis of all kinds of plastic art. Consequently, Xu Beihong proclaimed that drawing from nature was the solution to the establishment of new Chinese painting.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Xu, 'Huo zhi bujie', p. 136.

<sup>643</sup> Xu, 'Angeer de sumiao', p. 161.

<sup>644</sup> Ingres' saying was the touchstone of the Academic curriculum. White, *Canvases and Careers*, p. 7.

<sup>645</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Xinguohua jianli de buzou', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 529-531 (p. 531).

Developing realistic skills by drawing from nature was also stressed in the 'Unresolved Doubts' article. Xu Beihong stated that modelling after nature was the Way (*Dao* 道) of art. To achieve this way, the barriers should be removed, including the Four Wangs and non-figurative Western modern painting. Xu Beihong demonstrated the superior status of realism in his mind by proclaiming that he did not worship any '-isms' in art, even Classicism, except for realism.<sup>646</sup> According to the context, Xu Beihong should be referring here to pictorial realism instead of the specific French painting school of the nineteenth century. As discussed in Chapter 4, realism had often been regarded by Xu Beihong as a painting method rather than a painting school. In the seventh issue of *Meizhan*, the renowned traditional painter Zheng Wuchang cited Courbet to cheer the candidates who had been rejected by the exhibition. Courbet, the promoter of Realism (*Xieshi zhuyi*), as Zheng Wuchang called it, opened his solo exhibition, entitled 'The Realist Courbet', after he was rejected by the Salon.<sup>647</sup> Although Courbet was not approved by the official exhibition, his non-traditional style changed the dull landscape of French art.<sup>648</sup> Zheng Wuchang was active in the traditional Chinese painting arena of Shanghai; nonetheless, his knowledge of Realism and its relationship with the development of Western modern art revealed the growing maturity of China's art field, in which a comprehensive knowledge of Western art could now be acquired.<sup>649</sup> Moreover, artists of different camps saw greater exchange of ideas and information. Compared to the revolutionary image of Zheng Wuchang's Realism, Xu Beihong's realism, which was rooted in pictorial verisimilitude, demonstrated far more the influence of the

<sup>646</sup> Xu, 'Huo zhi bujie', pp. 136-137.

<sup>647</sup> Courbet opened his one man exhibition in Paris in 1855, entitled 'Le Réalisme, G. Courbet', Ernst Hans Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London and New York, 2007), p. 384.

<sup>648</sup> Zheng Wuchang, 'Xiwang yu luoxuanzhe' 希望於落選者, 'My Hope for Those who Are Rejected by the Exhibition', *Meizhan*, 7 (1929), p. 7.

<sup>649</sup> A brief account of Zheng Wuchang, see Yun, *Minguo shuhua jia huizhuan*, pp. 316-317.

Academy. However, Xu Beihong's emphasis on modelling after nature was in accord with Courbet's stance to 'be the pupil of no-one but nature.'<sup>650</sup> Realism's rebellion lay in its objection to the classical idealised beauty in pursuit of an empirical and faithful rendering of the concrete world.<sup>651</sup> Its revolutionary stance coincided with Xu Beihong's reformed attitude towards the conventional paradigms of the mindscapes of literati painting, which he advocated should be based on drawing from nature instead of copying painting manuals. In terms of innovation, pictorial realism, which Xu Beihong strived to promote in China, might accord with radical French Realism more than the academic realism. Nevertheless, Xu Beihong's realism was also intertwined with nationalism. With regard to national glory, Xu Beihong's realism and the French academic realism appeared to converge.<sup>652</sup> Xu Beihong's realism demonstrated the complexity of the adoption of the Western artistic system in China, as the traditions to be challenged were different. Moreover, nationalism and modernity were often intertwined in twentieth-century Chinese art.

To proclaim a break with the academic traditions, Realism advocated looking at the world with a fresh eye instead of the academic eye. Through Bourdieu's study of the writing of Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) and the paintings of Manet, being free from the academic and Salon monopoly made Realism see the emergence of autonomy in the French literary and artistic fields in the nineteenth century.<sup>653</sup> The modernist artists were thus privileged to be in a state of isolation of creation, free from patronage, pictorial conventions, political dictation and other restraints. Xu Zhimo's perspective on modernist painting

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<sup>650</sup> Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, p. 384.

<sup>651</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, p. 23.

<sup>652</sup> See Chapter 4-2.

<sup>653</sup> Chris Murray, *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 2003), pp. 56-61.

apparently invoked the context of the Western art world, since he maintained that real art could not be measured with moral implications, social dictation or pictorial paradigms. In this respect, Xu Zhimo's knowledge of Western art appeared more contemporary and more accurate than Xu Beihong's. The emphasis on social responsibility and visual verisimilitude made Xu Beihong's realist stance relatively conservative in the light of the discursive framework of Western modern art. The dispute between the two Xus reflected the conflict between the modernist camp and the academic camp in the French art world. Their debates thus demonstrated the continuation of the adoption of Western artistic discourse in China's art world. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong's pictorial realism turned out to be modern and revolutionary in terms of a break with the non-figurative tendencies of orthodox Chinese painting. Therefore, the dispute over 'Doubts' not only replicated the conflict in French art, but also unfolded the contradictory nature of China's own art field.<sup>654</sup> The conventions of representation were diametrically opposite in Chinese and Western art. The former was dominated by the abstract and expressive brushwork of the literati aesthetics, while the latter by the narrative and realistic modes. When Chinese painting underwent modernisation, which was ushered in by China's encounter with the West, it was inevitably modelled after the West. However, the non-figurative fashions of Western modern art seemed to accord with the traditional paradigms of Chinese painting, which the radical Chinese intellectuals and artists aimed to dismiss; whereas the realistic representations that Western modern art wanted to break with were conceived to be the device for modernising Chinese painting. Moreover, the contexts for the emergence of both Chinese and Western modern art were also different. Autonomy in Western

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<sup>654</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 103.

modern art arose as an objection to capitalist dominance in the modern society of the West.<sup>655</sup> The modernisation of Chinese painting, however, and the construction of the fine art field were motivated by the call for strengthening China. Western autonomy was embodied in the bohemian life-style of the artists, while the nationalist ethos of the Chinese art field led artists to demonstrate an obsession with China. This difference was also manifested in the two Xus' explanations of the real. While Xu Zhimo defended artists' egoism, Xu Beihong stressed the social responsibility of art.

As realism invoked the dialectic between the 'true reality' and the 'mere appearance' in the West, the two Xus' dispute also revealed the diversity and ambiguity of meaning with reference to the term *zhen*.<sup>656</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, *zhen* could refer to veracity, reality, fact and truth. Since it was shared by both of the Chinese terms *xiezhen* and *zhenxiang*, pictorial realism was thus seen to be capable of reflecting social reality. Accordingly, *xieshi*, the Chinese equivalent of realism and the twentieth-century neologism to replace the indigenous realism of *xiezhen*, had been carrying the social responsibility of representing social truth since it was introduced into China. Xu Beihong's definition of *zhen* demonstrated this perception of realism and reality, which was pervasive among radical intellectuals. Nonetheless, Xu Zhimo employed a more metaphysical approach to the term *zhen*. The two Xus' perception of the real reflected the extent to which Western discourse had been transplanted to China on the one hand; on the other hand, it demonstrated the level to which Western discourse was translated, appropriated and distorted by its Chinese agents according to their position in the local art field. Xu Beihong's appropriation of

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<sup>655</sup> Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed'.

<sup>656</sup> For the dialectic centred on realism and its relationship with modernism and post-modernism, see Pam Morris, *Realism* (London and New York, 2005).



the real, which seemed to gain more response from his contemporaries, revealed that the social role of modern art was stressed in China, i.e. the consideration of the well-being of the nation and her people, as Michel Hockx points out.<sup>657</sup> It also pointed to the association between China's art field and the national ethos, which disturbed the development of avant-garde art in China, and also led to the Westernised artists turning to the creation of ink painting in their later careers, such as Xu Beihong.<sup>658</sup>

The two Xus' debates centred on the real reflected the wide circulation of Western modern art in China, which evoked Xu Beihong's disappointment as well as his anxiety towards the repressed space for the promotion of his realism. The Realism, which Zhen Wuchang introduced, also seemed to challenge the realism that Xu Beihong aimed to promote in China. His anxiety was manifested in his provocative action of withdrawing from the exhibition and his censure for the modernist painters. The speeches of 1926, which were examined in detail in the previous chapter, revealed that pictorial realism had been the central issue in Xu Beihong's artistic thoughts. These speeches helped to establish Xu Beihong's reputation as a promising and modern Chinese artist, who was a trustworthy agent of Western art in China. With his fame growing, Xu Beihong took an increasingly rigid realist stance. In his autobiography published in 1930, Xu Beihong repeated his belief in realism. He proclaimed that his goal was to pursue scholarly art by means of seeking 'the real' (*qiuzhen* 求真) in art. To reach this goal, he would strive to promote realism and prevent commercialism.<sup>659</sup> Through the appropriation of the real, Xu Beihong correlated *zhen* with realism, truth and sincerity, and this led him to refer to realism as the best cure for both

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<sup>657</sup> Hockx, *The Literary Field of Twentieth-Century China*, pp. 12.

<sup>658</sup> Croizier, 'Post-Impressionist in Pre-War Shanghai'; Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', pp. 127-130.

<sup>659</sup> Xu, 'Beihong zishu', pp. 25-26.

social and artistic crises. By means of the translation and appropriation of realism, Xu Beihong gradually became a remarkable agent on behalf of Western art in China; then he in turn exerted his agency to consolidate the importance of realism in the Chinese art field.

### 5.3 The Conflicting Agencies

Xu Beihong withdrew from the National Art Exhibition because he was disappointed that the exhibition was controlled by formalists. However, some commentators pointed out that works in the style of Realism constituted the main part of the Western-style painting section at the exhibition. They also noticed that there were fewer works in the style of Post-impressionism, which had often been the mainstream of the Shanghai-based exhibitions.<sup>660</sup> Realistic paintings, such as those of Pan Yuliang, were held in high esteem at the National Art Exhibition (Fig. 144).<sup>661</sup> Even Xu Beihong himself said in 'Doubts' that he was delighted to see the absence of such Western modern paintings as those of Matisse and Cézanne at the exhibition. His protest against the formalist dominance may have been aimed at Liu Haisu and the Shanghai Art Academy, which favoured Post-Impressionism and guided the mainstream Shanghai art world.

Liu Haisu had been an active figure in the Shanghai art world since the 1910s. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Liu Haisu's Shanghai Art Academy was among the earliest art schools to teach Western painting in China. He was also a founding member of the Heavenly Horse Society, which held exhibitions annually and claimed to be modelled on the French Salon and the Japanese *Teiten*.<sup>662</sup> The Society was active and influential in Shanghai from the late 1910s to 1927, when it was suspended due to the political upheaval.<sup>663</sup> Liu Haisu had

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<sup>660</sup> Li Yuyi, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (II)' 教育部全國美術展覽會參觀記(二), 'A Report of My Visit to the National Art Exhibition Held by the Ministry of Education: II', *Funi*, 15.7 (1929), pp. 1-4 (p. 2). Song, 'Xiyang huapai xitong yu meizhan xihua pingshu', p. 44.

<sup>661</sup> Li, 'Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (II)', pp. 1-2. Hu Gentian 胡根天, 'Kanle diyici quanguo meizhan Xihua chupin de yinxiang' 看了第一次全國美展西畫出品的印象, 'The Impression of the Western-Style Paintings at the First National Art Exhibition', *Yiguan* 藝觀, 3 (1929), pp. 37-40.

<sup>662</sup> Liu, 'Tianmahui jiujiang shi sheme', p. 66.

<sup>663</sup> Huang Ke 黃可, 'Shanghai de meishu yuanxiao han meishu shetuan' 上海的美術院校和美術社團, 'The Art Schools and Societies in Shanghai', *Duoyun* 朵雲, 47 (1997), pp. 139-186 (p.

demonstrated a leaning towards Post-impressionism and avant-garde art since the early stages of his artistic career. In 1918, Liu Haisu visited Japan and later published a book, entitled *Riben xinmeishu de xinyinxiang* (日本新美術の新印象, 'A New Impression of the New Art in Japan', first published in 1921), in which he provided a detailed account of Japan's art exhibitions and education.<sup>664</sup> The book revealed that Liu Haisu possessed a comprehensive knowledge of Western art, from Classicism to the latest trends of Cubism and Futurism. He observed that Post-impressionism had gained great popularity in Japan, and he preferred this kind of art of sensibility to that of rationality.<sup>665</sup> Moreover, Liu Haisu's interest in new art was manifested in his comments on the exhibition organised by the *Nikakai* (二科會, 'Second Division Society'), an artistic association which had been founded in 1914 by progressive artists in an attempt to break away from the influence of official authority.<sup>666</sup> Liu Haisu had a high regard for this avant-garde exhibition. Among the works displayed in the *Nikakai* exhibition, he recommended in particular the paintings of the artists Yorozu Tetsugoro (萬鐵五郎, 1885-1927) and Togo Seiji (東郷青児, 1897-1978), which were executed in the styles of Cubism and Futurism (Fig. 146).<sup>667</sup> Liu Haisu's penchant for Western modern art was also manifest in his own painting. The bold brushwork and bright colour in his works often caused him to be compared with Van Gogh (Fig. 147).<sup>668</sup>

Liu Haisu's enthusiasm for art led him to develop an all-round career. In addition to Cai Yuanpei, he was another key person behind the move to bring the national art exhibition to reality. Since 1922, he had proposed to the Education

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<sup>664</sup> Liu Haisu, *Riben xinmeishu de xinyinxiang* (Shanghai, 1925).

<sup>665</sup> Liu, *Riben xinmeishu de xinyinxiang*, p. 16.

<sup>666</sup> For a short account of *Nikakai*, see the website, <http://www.artnet.com/library/06/0625/t062500.asp>.

<sup>667</sup> Liu, *Riben xinmeishu de xinyinxiang*, pp. 60-69.

<sup>668</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 73.

Ministry several times that a national art exhibition should be organised.<sup>669</sup>

Because there seemed little hope of holding an art exhibition on a national scale soon, Liu Haisu then proposed instead that a provincial art exhibition should be organised first. This proposal was approved and led to the Art Exhibition of Jiangsu Province, the first provincial art exhibition in China, which was held in Shanghai in 1924.<sup>670</sup> In 1927, when a National Art Exhibition was finally being organised, Lin Fengmian was appointed its principal administrator.<sup>671</sup> Liu Haisu did not take up the directorship of the National Art Exhibition perhaps because of his own turbulent state: he fled to Japan in April 1927 for political reasons.<sup>672</sup> Later, he was asked by Cai Yuanpei to make a survey of art in Europe in 1928.<sup>673</sup> Although Liu Haisu was in Europe during the art exhibition, several of his colleagues took significant positions in the organisation of the exhibition. Jiang Xiaojian (江小鶴, 1894-1939) and Wang Jiyuan (王濟遠, 1893-1975), who were responsible for exhibition arrangement, were both professors in the Shanghai Art Academy. Yang Qingqing, the chief editor of *Meizhan*, was also a member of staff of the Shanghai Art Academy.<sup>674</sup> Moreover, Xu Zhimo also looked for Liu Haisu's support when he and Xu Beihong were in dispute over Western modern art in China.<sup>675</sup> Liu Haisu's long-term active participation in the Shanghai art world meant that he was still influential in the 1929 exhibition, although he left for Europe after the exhibition had opened.

<sup>669</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', pp. 630-634.

<sup>670</sup> Liu Haisu, '*Jiangsusheng diyijie meizhan*' 江蘇省第一屆美展, 'The First Art Exhibition of Jiangsu Province', in Zhu and Yuan, *Liu Haisu yishu wenxuan*, pp. 90-93.

<sup>671</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', p. 634.

<sup>672</sup> Zhao Li 趙力 and Yu Ding 余丁 eds., *1542-2000 Zhongguo youhua wenxian* 1542-2000 中國油畫文獻, 'A Bibliography of Chinese Oil Painting, 1542-2000' (Hunan, 2002), pp. 514-515.

<sup>673</sup> Liu Haisu was appointed to make a trip to Europe in 1928, and he started his journey in 1929. He arrived in Paris in March 1929. Yuan Zhihuang 袁志煌, 'Nianpu' 年譜, 'Chronology', in Zhu and Yuan, *Liu Haisu yishu wenxuan*, pp. 545-546.

<sup>674</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', pp. 634-635.

<sup>675</sup> Xu Zhimo, 'Zhi Liu Haisu xin shijiu tong' 致劉海粟信十九通, 'Nineteen Letters to Liu Haisu', in *Xu Zhimo quanji: Xiju shuxin ji*, 徐志摩全集: 戲劇 書信集, 'Compilation of Xu Zhimo: The Volume of Drama and Letters' (Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 130-149 (pp. 138-141).

Liu Haisu became an acknowledged agent of Western art in China's art world earlier than Xu Beihong. In the 1920s, when Xu Beihong was pursuing art studies in Paris, Liu Haisu strived to promote Post-Impressionism in China. In 1922, Liu Haisu made a speech about the latest trends in Western modern painting to the Beijing University Painting Research Society at the invitation of Cai Yuanpei.<sup>676</sup> In the speech, he introduced the new styles of Western painting, such as Post-impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism and others. He had a high regard for Post-impressionism as the forerunner of new Western art, in that it abandoned rational realism in pursuit of subjective expression.<sup>677</sup> Liu Haisu argued that art had to represent an artist's sincere feelings. His point of view matched that of Xu Zhimo as expressed in 'I Have Doubts, Too'. In addition to the speech, Liu Haisu also held his own one-man show in Beijing from 15 to 18 January 1922. Cai Yuanpei published a specific article to introduce Liu Haisu and his art. In this article, Cai Yuanpei pointed out the influence of Post-impressionism on Liu Haisu, as demonstrated in Liu Haisu's honest representation of his feelings in his landscape painting.<sup>678</sup> Liu Haisu's status as the Chinese spokesman for Post-impressionism was also confirmed in the reviews of the 1929 National Art Exhibition.<sup>679</sup> Looking at Chinese artists, Liu Haisu found in Shi Tao's (石濤, 1642-1708) painting a correspondence with Post-impressionism (Fig. 148). He argued that the mindscape which was represented in Shi Tao's painting was in accordance with the inner reality of Post-impressionism. Accordingly, he suggested, long before Post-impressionism,

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<sup>676</sup> Liu Haisu's speech was entitled, *Xiandai huihua de xinqvshi* (現代繪畫的新趨勢, 'New Trends in Modern Painting'). The content was published in *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10, 12 & 13 January 1922.

<sup>677</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 10 January 1922.

<sup>678</sup> *Beijing daxue rikan*, 16 January 1922

<sup>679</sup> Song, 'Xiyang huapai xitong yu meizhan xihua pingshu', p. 44.

modern art had started in China as early as Shi Tao's time.<sup>680</sup> The vigorous brushwork and vivid colours in Liu Haisu's later landscape painting represented a hybrid style, demonstrating the influence of both Shi Tao and Post-impressionism (Fig. 147).

Liu Haisu spoke of Post-impressionism in glowing terms. He also compared the expressive brushwork of Chinese painting with the art of Impressionism. His perspective was similar to that of traditional painters, such as Chen Shizeng, as demonstrated in his often-cited 'The Value of Literati Painting'.<sup>681</sup> In the 1920s, the force of traditional Chinese painting in China's art world was still greater than that of Western art. The number of traditional painting societies was about three times that of those devoted to Western art. According to the calculations of the scholar Yen Chuan-ying, from 1900 to 1929 there were twenty-one societies devoted to traditional painting and six societies for Western painting in Shanghai.<sup>682</sup> Several of the Western painting societies were set up by the staff of the Shanghai Art Academy. In addition to the Heavenly Horse Society, the Eastern Painting Society (*Dongfang huahui* 東方畫會, 1915) and the Association of Chinese Art (*Zhonghua meishu xiehui* 中華美術協會, 1916) were set up by Chen Baoyi, Wang Yachen and Wu Shiguang, who were all professors at the Shanghai Art Academy.<sup>683</sup> Given the significance of the Shanghai Art Academy in the Western art arena of Shanghai, Liu Haisu's promotion of Post-impressionism was bound to gain popularity. Moreover, by linking Post-impressionism and traditional Chinese painting, Western modern art would become more consolidated because of the response from the traditional painting

<sup>680</sup> Liu Haisu, 'Shi Tao yu Houqi yinxiangpai' 石濤與後期印象派, 'Shi Tao and Post-impressionism', in Zhu and Yuan, *Liu Haisu yishu wenxuan*, pp. 69-73.

<sup>681</sup> Chen Shizeng's perspective on literati painting and modern Western art has been discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>682</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', p. 653.

<sup>683</sup> For a full account of Shanghai's art schools and societies before 1949, see Huang, 'Shanghai de meishu yuanxiao han meishu shetuan'.

circle. All of this meant that Xu Beihong had to face a huge challenge to promote his academic realism in the Shanghai art world when he returned to China in the late 1920s.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Xu Beihong quickly assumed the role of a new accomplished promoter of Western art during his return journey in 1926. In several of the speeches that he made at this time, Xu Beihong did not reveal any obvious dislike of the modernist painters, although his emphasis on painstaking craftsmanship had demonstrated this tendency. In a speech delivered to the Chinese University of Art, Xu Beihong mentioned Manet, Cézanne and Matisse as examples of the variety of styles in French art, but without the same bitter criticism of Western modern art that he later expressed in 'Doubts'. He argued that there were no absolute standards by which to evaluate which style was better and which was worse.<sup>684</sup> However, his realist stance grew more and more ingrained after he returned to Shanghai in 1927. It seemed that Xu Beihong was eager to claim his position in the Shanghai art world. In the Associated Art Exhibition held in September 1927, to which Xu Beihong also contributed some of his paintings, he criticised the drawings of his friend Chang Yu for their lack of construction, although he acknowledged that they represented a special flavour (*qiqu* 奇趣).<sup>685</sup> The simplicity of line and composition as well as the decorative colour and sensual nudes in Chang Yu's paintings have often led to him being called the 'Chinese Matisse' (Fig. 99).<sup>686</sup> Eugene Wang used Chang Yu's art to exemplify Xu Zhimo's artistic thoughts in the two Xus debate of 1929. Chang Yu's paintings were held in high esteem by Xu Zhimo, who referred to the

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<sup>684</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Zai Zhonghua yishu daxue jiangyanci', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 93-95 (p. 94).

<sup>685</sup> Xu, 'Meishu lianhe zhanlanhui jilue', p. 19.

<sup>686</sup> Jones, 'San Yu', p. 228. Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 116.



distorted legs of Chang Yu's nudes as 'cosmic legs'.<sup>687</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 4, Xu Beihong, Chang Yu and Xu Zhimo developed a friendship when they were in Paris in the 1920s. Chang Yu and Xu Zhimo still retained their close relationship after Xu Zhimo moved back to China. Their friendship was demonstrated in a letter which Xu Zhimo sent to Liu Haisu after the two Xus debate to complain of Xu Beihong's stubbornness and to enlist support from the overseas student circle.<sup>688</sup> In this letter, Xu Zhimo also reminded Liu Haisu of the horse painting that Chang Yu had promised to execute for him. During Liu Haisu's sojourn in Paris, Xu Zhimo continued to write to him and in his letters he also revealed his concern for Chang Yu.<sup>689</sup> It seems that Xu Zhimo and Chang Yu then forged an alliance with Liu Haisu because of their similar perspective on art. However, Xu Beihong parted company with them on the issue of modernity in Chinese art and took the diametrically opposite stance.

Since Chang Yu was regarded as the Chinese Matisse, Xu Beihong's criticism of his paintings for their non-figurative tendencies predicted his later condemnation of Matisse and other modernist painters. In the same year of 1927, Xu Beihong published another article to introduce the art of the Swedish painter Anders Zorn (1860-1920).<sup>690</sup> Zorn's painting combined the atmospheric effects of Impressionism with the thorough techniques of realism, which was reminiscent of the works of the French academic painters (Fig. 149).<sup>691</sup> In this article, Xu Beihong rated Zorn's work highly as the exemplification of sincerity (*zhenshuai* 真率), and censured Renoir, Bonnard, Cézanne and Matisse for the

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<sup>687</sup> Chen, *San Yu*, p. 42.

<sup>688</sup> Xu, 'Zhi Liu Haisu xin shijiu tong', pp. 138-139.

<sup>689</sup> Chen, *San Yu*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>690</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Zorn luezhuan' 左恩略傳, 'A Brief Account of Zorn', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 113-121.

<sup>691</sup> Karl Asplund, *Anders Zorn: His Life and Work* (London, 1921).

inferiority and vulgarity of their paintings.<sup>692</sup> Xu Beihong's opinions given in this article share a great similarity with the point of view he expressed in 'Doubts'. His hostile attitude towards Western modern painting may have been a response to the division in the Shanghai art field at that time. In 1926, a campaign arose at the Shanghai Art Academy. Some staff seceded from the Shanghai Academy and established the *Xinhua* Art Academy.<sup>693</sup> Zhu Yingpeng (朱應鵬, 1895-?), the writer of the art column in *Shenbao*, and also a professor at the *Xinhua* Art Academy, proclaimed in 1927 that the artists involved in the Associated Art Exhibition would refuse to participate in the National Art Exhibition if the latter cooperated with 'depraved and deceitful people' (*fuhua yu hudiao fenzi* 腐化與胡調份子), which is a reference to Liu Haisu and the Shanghai Art Academy.<sup>694</sup> Zhu Yingpeng pointed specifically to the division in the Shanghai art world in the article, *Nanbei yishujie tuanjie de tujing* (南北藝術界團結的途徑, 'The Way to Unite the Northern and Southern Art Fields'), which was published in the October 1927 edition of *Shenbao*.<sup>695</sup> In this article, Zhu Yingpeng also criticised the Great Beijing Art Meeting (*Beijing yishu dahui* 北京藝術大會) for the display of old-fashioned forms of art, such as traditional opera, music and painting. He then praised the Associated Art Exhibition, which exhibited the works of Xu Beihong, Chang Yu, Chen Baoyi and others, for rectifying the failings of the Great Beijing Art Meeting by rejecting non-creative music and theatre, as well as hermit paintings. By this means, Zhu Yingpeng warned the Northern artists not to associate with the degenerate artists of Shanghai otherwise the participators in the Associated Art Exhibition would withdraw from the 1929 National Art Exhibition. The main Northern artist whom

<sup>692</sup> Xu, 'Zorn luezhuan', p. 119.

<sup>693</sup> Huang, 'Shanghai de meishu yuanxiao han meishu shetuan', p. 153.

<sup>694</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', p. 655.

<sup>695</sup> Zhu Yingpeng, 'Nanbei yishujie tuanjie de tujing', *Shenbao*, 22 October 1927.

Zhu Yingpeng was warning was Lin Fengmian, who was the organiser of the Great Beijing Art Meeting.<sup>696</sup> Due to political upheaval in the North, Cai Yuanpei, Lin Fengmian and other Beijing-based artists moved down south, which gave rise to the occurrence of the first National Art Exhibition. The gathering of artists from all over the country increased the vigour of Shanghai's art world, but also aggravated the conflict which existed in the art field.

Zhu Yingpeng's article pointed out the division in the Shanghai art world as well as the sense of superiority felt in the city. Lin Fengmian went to France to study art in 1919 and returned to China to take charge of the National Beijing Art College in 1926. Because the warlord Zhang Zuolin (張作霖, 1875-1928) closed the School, Lin Fengmian then went down to Shanghai and assisted Cai Yuanpei in developing the idea of continuous art education.<sup>697</sup> Compared with the artists mentioned above, such as Zhu Yingpeng, Liu Haisu, Chen Baoyi, and others, Lin Fengmian was a newcomer in the Shanghai art world. Nonetheless, Lin Fengmian demonstrated his aspirations in art by actively participating in various artistic activities. In 1927, he organised the large-scale Great Beijing Art Meeting, which claimed to model itself after the French Salon and aimed to unite artists all over the nation. The committee of the Art Meeting issued the often-cited manifesto:

Down with the tradition of copying!  
Down with the art of the aristocratic minority!  
Down with the antisocial art that is divorced from the masses!  
Up with the creative art that represents the times!  
Up with the art that can be shared by all the people!  
Up with the people's art that stands at the crossroads!<sup>698</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> For a full account of the Great Beijing Art Meeting, see 'Beijing yishu dahui' 北京藝術大會, 'The Great Beijing Art Meeting', *Yishujie* 藝術界, 16 (1927); also in Zhao and Yu, *1542-2000 Zhongguo youhua wenxian*, pp. 518-519.

<sup>697</sup> Liu, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she', p. 3.

<sup>698</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 44.

打倒模仿的傳統的藝術！  
打倒貴族的少數獨享的藝術！  
打倒非民間的離開民眾的藝術！  
提倡創造的代表時代的藝術！  
提倡全民的各階級共享的藝術！  
提倡民間的表現十字街頭的藝術！<sup>699</sup>

This manifesto obviously echoed Chen Duxiu's appeal to writers to overthrow aristocratic, classical and forest literature in pursuit of national, realistic and social literature in his 1917 article, *Wenxue geming lun* (文學革命論, 'On the Literary Revolution'), which had become the most representative manifesto of the New Culture Movement.<sup>700</sup> The manifesto of the Great Beijing Art Meeting demonstrated Lin Fengmian's aspirations to lead a new revolution in art as the New Culture Movement had done in literature. Lin Fengmian's passion for art continued in the statement 'A Letter to the National Art Field', which was published in the same year of 1927. In this statement, Lin Fengmian repeated his call to artists all over the country to unite. Moreover, he advocated replacing religion with art and emphasised the social responsibilities of art.<sup>701</sup> Lin Fengmian's artistic statement apparently followed Cai Yuanpei and the reform-minded intelligentsia of the New Culture Movement. His revolutionary attitude towards art remained after he moved to Hangzhou to head the National Hangzhou Academy of Art in 1928. The Art Movement Society (*Yishu yundongshe* 藝術運動社) was founded in the same year. Its manifesto claimed to deny completely the value of traditional art and to associate with the artists preoccupied with creating new art, which continued Lin Fengmian's radical stance.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>699</sup> 'Beijing yishu dahui', p. 519.

<sup>700</sup> Chen, 'Wenxue geming lun'.

<sup>701</sup> Lin, 'Zhi quanguo yishujie shu'.

<sup>702</sup> Lin Wenzheng 林文錦, 'Yishu yundongshe xuanyan' 藝術運動社宣言, 'The Manifesto of the Art Movement Society', in Zhao and Yu, *1542-2000 Zhongguo youhua wenxian*, p. 572.

Lin Fengmian's revolutionary attitude may not only have been aimed at traditional Chinese painting, but also at the Western-style painting in the Shanghai art world. The Shanghai-based artists, such as Chen Baoyi, Ding Yanyong and Ni Yide, had all learnt painting in Japan. Although Liu Haisu did not take art courses at schools in Japan, his knowledge of Western modern art was acquired through Japan first instead of from Europe directly. Moreover, the teachers in the Shanghai Art Academy, such as Ding Song and Chang Yuguang, were both influential in the commercial art arena of Shanghai, as discussed in Chapter 2. On the other hand, the staff of the National Hangzhou Academy of Art had mostly studied art in France, such as Li Jinfa, Lin Wenzheng (林文鏞, 1903-1990), Liu Jipiao (劉既漂), Wu Dayu (吳大羽, 1903-1988), Cai Weilian (蔡威廉, 1904-1939), and others.<sup>703</sup> In addition to establishing the Art Movement Society, the National Hangzhou Academy of Art also issued the journal *Apollo* in 1928. The articles published in *Apollo* revealed that the National Hangzhou Academy of Art aimed to put Cai Yuanpei's artistic ideals into practice, looked for the best way to combine Chinese and Western art, promoted sculpture, and emphasised the importance of drawing in the art curriculum.<sup>704</sup> It appeared that Lin Fengmian intended to make the National Hangzhou Academy of Art the base for the artistic New Culture Movement as well as for 'authentic' Western art, that is Western art direct from its origins instead of through a third party such as Japan.

After heading the National Hangzhou Academy of Art, Lin Fengmian was seemingly too busy to take charge of the Academy and the Exhibition at the same time. So the directorship was then moved into the hands of the Shanghai Art Academy. In transferring the directorship, Lin Fengmian tried to retain part of

<sup>703</sup> Liu, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she', p. 4.

<sup>704</sup> Liu, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she', pp. 6-12.

the power by proposing an associated directorship. However, his proposal was not approved and the leadership was then made up of the Shanghai Art Academy and the realist painter Li Yishi.<sup>705</sup> Lin Fengmian still exhibited several paintings in the National Art Exhibition, including *Nanfang* (南方, 'The South'), *Juan* (倦, 'Weariness'), *Hai* (海, 'Sea'), and *Gongxian* (貢獻, 'Tribute').<sup>706</sup> Other members of the staff of the National Hangzhou Academy of Art, such as Cai Weilian and Wu Dayu also participated in the National Art Exhibition.<sup>707</sup> However, their disappointment with the National Art Exhibition was stated bluntly in *Apollo*. The article, *Di yi ye* (第一頁, 'The First Page'), criticised the fact that the National Art Exhibition was filled with 'poorly made fakes' (*Cuzhi lanzao de yanpin* 粗製濫造的贗品) and appealed to spectators to put their hopes for art on the West Lake Exposition (*Xihu bolanhui* 西湖博覽會), whose art hall was organised by the National Hangzhou Academy of Art.<sup>708</sup> On 24 May 1929, only one month after the National Art Exhibition, Lin Fengmian and the National Hangzhou Academy of Art opened an exhibition in Shanghai, claiming to imitate the French *Salon des Refusés* (Salon of Rejects) and to exhibit the works of real art which had been rejected by the National Art Exhibition.<sup>709</sup> Lin Fengmian exhibited his painting *Renlei de tongku* (人類的痛苦, 'Humanity's Pain', 1929) (Fig. 88). In the picture of this painting, the distorted human torsos are dissolved in the black void of the background. The bold brushstrokes and heavy colours reinforce the torture the humans are suffering. Lin Fengmian's painting, which

<sup>705</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', pp. 655-656.

<sup>706</sup> <http://ed.arted.gov.tw/nae/index.aspx>.

<sup>707</sup> For their works in the National Art Exhibition, check the website, <http://ed.arted.gov.tw/nae/index.aspx>.

<sup>708</sup> 'Di yi ye – Ba xiwang jigei Yishuguan ba' 第一頁 — 把希望寄給藝術館罷, 'The First Page – Put Your Hopes on the Art Hall', 亞波羅 *Apollo*, 7 (1929), p. 535. The West Lake Exposition was open on June 6 1929, see Qiao Zhaohong 喬兆紅, '1929 nian de Hangzhou Xihu bolanhui' 1929 年的杭州西湖博覽會, 'The 1929 West Lake Exposition in Hangzhou', *Guangxi shehui kexue* 廣西社會科學, 93 (2003), pp. 157-160.

<sup>709</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong', p. 24.

expresses his deep sympathy for what human beings have suffered in theatrical brushwork, has caused him to be regarded as Chinese Expressionist.<sup>710</sup> Lin Fengmian's work may have been executed to reflect the pain of the Chinese people caused by national disasters. Lin Fengmian's intention was to represent in another way, different from Xu Beihong's realism, an 'obsession with China'.<sup>711</sup> Besides Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu was praised as the Chinese representative of Impressionism because of the bright colours and brisk brushwork in his paintings (Fig. 150). Cai Weilian was highly regarded in both the National Art Exhibition and the Exhibition of the National Hangzhou Academy of Art due to her successful combination of Realist precision and Impressionist colour in her portraits (Fig. 151).<sup>712</sup> In addition to Liu Haisu's Japanese Post-impressionism and Xu Beihong's French academic realism, Lin Fengmian and his colleagues aimed to introduce to the Chinese people another aspect of Western modern art. Their efforts were also acknowledged. Jin Weijun approved the Exhibition of Rejects for bringing to China a more modern kind of Western art, which was more avant-garde than the Western-style painting of Liu Haisu and the Shanghai Art Academy.<sup>713</sup> Zhu Yingpeng also regarded highly the vigour and strength in Lin Fengmian's paintings, which reflected the direct influence of European art and thus was distinctive from the modes inspired by Japanese art.<sup>714</sup>

The contested atmosphere in the Shanghai art world was noticed by critics and by artists themselves. The calligrapher Ma Gongyu (馬公愚, 1890-1968) indicated in the National Art Exhibition that Westernised artists liked to do something new just to be original. Moreover, they attacked artists who were

<sup>710</sup> Hua He, *Lin Fengmian: Ein Expressionistischer Maler in China* (Lin Fengmian: A Expressionistic Painter in China) (Frankfurt, 2007).

<sup>711</sup> Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', p. 49.

<sup>712</sup> Liu, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she', pp. 15-17.

<sup>713</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong', p. 24.

<sup>714</sup> Liu, 'Yaboluo yu Yishu yundong she', p. 18.

different from them. Ma Gongyu compared their behaviour with that of belligerent warlords.<sup>715</sup> Jin Weijun directly pointed out that an exhibition was the best battlefield for art. The larger the exhibition was, the fiercer the battle on the art field would be.<sup>716</sup> Lin Fengmian held other exhibitions to compete with the National Art Exhibition, while Xu Beihong was conspicuous by his absence from it. Xu Beihong was not the only one to withdraw from the National Exhibition. Several artists who were active in the Shanghai art world also refused to contribute their works to the National Art Exhibition, such as Zhu Yingpeng, Zhang Yuguang, Chen Baoyi and Ding Yanyong, although Zhang Yuguang later agreed to join the committee and Ding Yanyong did exhibit his painting *Dushu zhi nü* (讀書之女, 'A Girl Reading') at the National Exhibition.<sup>717</sup> Zhang Yuguang and Chen Baoyi were professors of the Shanghai Art Academy. In the late 1920s, however, they seceded from it and established the Chinese University of Art and the *Xinhua* Art Academy. Ding Yanyong taught at the Chinese University of Art and Zhu Yingpeng at the *Xinhua* Art Academy. They also founded the Shanghai Art Association (*Shanghai yishu xiehui* 上海藝術協會) in June 1928 and held their first art exhibition in October 1928. This exhibition displayed more than 200 pieces of artwork and attracted an audience of more than ten thousand spectators.<sup>718</sup> News reports published in *Shenbao* claimed that the Exhibition of the Shanghai Art Association featured the works of the most eminent artists in Shanghai, including Xu Beihong.<sup>719</sup> He displayed five paintings in the exhibition, including *Xiaosheng* (蕭聲, 'Playing Flute', 1926) and *Zhang Ji xiang* (張繼像, 'Portrait of Zhang Ji', 1928), a portrait of the

<sup>715</sup> Ma Gongyu, 'Quanguo yishujie de zeren' 全國藝術界的責任, 'The Responsibility of the National Art Field', *Meizhan*, 4 (1929), pp. 3-4 (p. 3).

<sup>716</sup> Jin, 'Meizhan yu yishu yundong', p. 12.

<sup>717</sup> Yen, 'Guanfang meishu wenhua kongjian de bijiao', p. 655. For a full list of the works exhibited at the National Art Exhibition, see the website, <http://ed.artc.gov.tw/nae/index.aspx>.

<sup>718</sup> Huang, 'Shanghai de meishu yuanxiao han meishu shetuan', p. 155.

<sup>719</sup> *Shenbao*, 3 October 1928.



important figure of Republican Revolution (Figs 152-153). Lu Erqiang (陸爾強), editor of several art textbooks, thought highly of Xu Beihong's realist paintings, which vividly rendered the portrayed figures, and represented their spirits at the same time. Lu praised Xu Beihong as the best practitioner of Courbet's Realism in China.<sup>720</sup> The painters of the Shanghai Art Association obviously intended to challenge the authority of the National Art Exhibition, which they believed to be controlled by the Shanghai Art Academy.

Xu Beihong taught at the Chinese University of Art from 1927. His withdrawal from the National Art Exhibition was thus understandable because he was responding to the secession movement which was led by his colleagues. Moreover, compared to Zhu Yingpeng's serious denigration of Liu Haisu as a deceitful person, Xu Beihong's attack on Western modern artists by using such words as 'shameless' and 'heroin' were not particularly emotional and personal. Zhu Yingpeng's criticism of Liu Haisu and the conservative artists of national painting can find echoes in Xu Beihong's attack on the promoters of Western modern painting and on the Four Wangs in 'Doubts'. As discussed earlier, Xu Beihong's rigid realist standpoint seemed to gain more support than Xu Zhimo's perspective under the nationalist atmosphere. Moreover, Xu Beihong also took advantage of the division in the Western art field in Shanghai to consolidate his position in the art world. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong's realist works were not always welcome in Shanghai. Lou Jinsheng (樓金聲), in his review of the 1927 Associated Art Exhibition, admired the painstaking craftsmanship that Xu Beihong represented in his works, however, Lou argued that the level of technical proficiency could not strike a chord with him.<sup>721</sup> Ni Yide held a similar

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<sup>720</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, p. 69.

<sup>721</sup> Lou Jinsheng, 'Canguan lianhe zhanlanhui' 參觀聯合展覽會, 'A Visit to the Associated Art Exhibition', *Shenbao*, 20 September 1927.

opinion of Xu Beihong's works: he affirmed the solid grounding that Xu Beihong had in realism. Although this kind of painting was popular in China, it could not evoke in him any great interest due to its lack of creativity.<sup>722</sup> Even the artists who were in the same camp as Xu Beihong represented in their paintings a style far different from Xu Beihong's realism. For example, Ding Yanyong was a colleague of Xu Beihong at the Chinese University of Art and also refused to participate in the National Art Exhibition at the beginning. However, the bold colour and sensual air in the style of Matisse in his nude painting demonstrated an obvious modernist tendency (Fig. 154). He later joined the avant-garde Storm Society, whose founding members were close to Liu Haisu.<sup>723</sup> During World War II, he joined Xu Beihong in the China Art Academy (*Zhongguo meishu xueyuan* 中國美術學院) in Chongqing, the Chinese provisional capital in the Second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>724</sup>

The division in the field of Western art which was manifest in the National Art Exhibition continued in the 1930s. The promoters of Western modern painting, such as Ni Yide, Pan Xunqin, Liu Haisu and Chang Yu, organised the Storm Society and the Muse Society in the 1930s to introduce the latest trends in Western art. The Storm Society was the first Chinese oil painting society and publically announced that it aimed to revitalise the Chinese art arena in the same way as Fauvism, Dadaism and Surrealism had done in the West.<sup>725</sup> This manifesto was also embodied in the paintings of its members. Many of the

<sup>722</sup> Ni Yide, 'Meishu lianzhan zhi huigu' 美術聯展之回顧, 'A Review of the Associated Art Exhibition', *Shenbao*, 7 October 1927.

<sup>723</sup> The Storm Society was founded by Pan Xunqin and Ni Yide in 1931. They both then with Liu Haisu established the Muse Society (*Moshe* 摩社) in 1932. News and articles about the Storm Society were frequently published in the journal of the Muse Society, *Yishu xunkan* (藝術旬刊, *The Art Magazine*). Chou and Wu, '1920 ji 30 niandai Zhongguo huajia fu Bali xihua hou dui Shanghai yitan de yingxiang', p. 654-655.

<sup>724</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>725</sup> Huang, 'Shanghai de meishu yuanxiao han meishu shetuan', p. 163. For an English version of the Storm Society Manifesto, see Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 234-235.

members' works were clearly modelled on Picasso, Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) and André Derain (1880-1954) (Fig. 155).<sup>726</sup> The Storm Society claimed to be creative in its pursuit of art for art's sake; while Zhu Yingpeng, who had been among the loudest opponents to Liu Haisu in the 1920s, made a speech in 1938, at the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, in which he stressed the social responsibility of artists. He argued that artists could not be indifferent to political issues and should create works in the style of realism so as to reflect the hard times faced by China.<sup>727</sup> Xu Beihong's artistic activities in the 1930s also responded to the patriotism pervasive in wartime China, as is shown in Zhu Yingpeng's speech. He was preoccupied with the making of realistic history painting and gradually turned to the creation of ink painting with nationalist implications. Xu Beihong's painting will be under scrutiny in the next chapter. In the 1930s and 1940s, Xu Beihong's nationalist painting, which responded to the wartime atmosphere in China, contributed a great deal to his eminent status in China's art world. On the other hand, the autonomous Storm Society gradually saw a decrease in its influence in the art field in the nationalist context.<sup>728</sup>

The debates and contests generated by the National Art Exhibition revealed the maturity and complexity of China's art field. An artist's accomplishments could receive highly polarised evaluations. Moreover, an artist's stance could also change according to his position or to the rules of game in the art field. The National Art Exhibition demonstrated a flourishing Chinese art field which accommodated a crowd of agents. They had to address the challenge of how to

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<sup>726</sup> Ni Yide, 'A Galaxy of the Storm Society', in Danzker, *Shanghai Modern 1919-1945*, pp. 236-241.

<sup>727</sup> Zhu Yingpeng, 'Meishujia dangqian de zeren' 藝術家當前的責任, 'The Contemporary Responsibilities of Artists', in Lang and Shui, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, Vol. I, pp. 439-443.

<sup>728</sup> Croizier, 'Post-Impressionist in Pre-War Shanghai'.

manipulate Western art to build their fame on the one hand, and how to adapt Western art into the local context of China on the other. Besides, they were compelled to pull between nationalist feelings and pressures and artistic autonomy. It seemed that twentieth-century Chinese artists were destined to live in an artistic context which was permanently intertwined with political upheaval. The first National Art Exhibition provided a glimpse into the complexity of China's art field, which was caused by the contradictory nature of Chinese and Western art as well as by the interference of politics. The interaction between various principles in the art field provided an answer to Xu Beihong's seemingly sudden turn to ink painting after the 1930s. It also revealed how Xu Beihong established his eminent status in China's art world by mastering the different rules of the game in the art field in different times.

## Chapter 6 The Creation of a New Chinese Painting

### 6.1 Hybridity

As discussed in the previous chapters, through the translation and appropriation of Western realism, Xu Beihong had gradually built his position in the competitive art field. Moreover, to exert his influence, Xu Beihong presented himself as a provocative figure in the discursive space of the 1929 National Art Exhibition, and had already started to create large-scale Chinese history paintings from 1928 to put into practice his thoughts about art. Xu Beihong's history paintings were mainly produced in three periods. The first period, between 1928 and 1932, was the most productive of the three. Almost all the most representative of Xu Beihong's history paintings were executed during this time, such as the oil paintings *Tian Heng yu wubai zhuangshi* (田橫與五百壯士, 'Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers', 1928-1930) (Fig. 89), *Xiwohou* (奚我后, 'Awaiting the Deliverer', 1930-1933) (Fig. 156), and the ink paintings *Liuchaoren shiyi tu* (六朝人詩意圖, 'Poetic Expression of People in the Six Periods', 1929) (Fig. 157) and *Jiufang Gao* (1931) (Fig. 2).<sup>729</sup> Xu Beihong also made some other smaller history paintings, including *Three Chivalrous Warriors* (Fig. 29), *Farewell My Concubine* (1931) (Fig. 72), and Confucius's father *Shu Liang He* (叔梁紇, 1931) (Fig. 158).<sup>730</sup> The second period occurred in 1940 when Xu Beihong was in India at the invitation of the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Although he was away from wartime China, Xu Beihong executed the history painting *Yugong yishan* (愚公移山, 'The Foolish Old Man Moving

<sup>729</sup> Xu Beihong first conducted on this theme in 1929. He then recreated another painting on this theme in 1939. The former version is now collected in The State Hermitage Museum, and the latter one is collected by Yang Yingfa (楊應法) and Yang Yingqun (楊應群) in Singapore. The illustration attached in this thesis uses the 1939 version. See *Xu Beihong zai Nanyang*, p. 219.

<sup>730</sup> The painting *Three Chivalrous Warriors* is undated. It was first published in the *Fortnight Magazine of National Central University* (*Zhongyang daxue banyuekan* 中央大學半月刊) in 1930. Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 70.

the Mountain'), one version in ink and one in oils, which was thought to express his patriotic emotions and his praise for Chinese resolve in the Second Sino-Japanese War (Figs 159-160).<sup>731</sup> The third period was between 1943 and 1944, during which time Xu Beihong created several history paintings on the theme of literature, including *Confucius Giving a Lecture* (Fig. 26), *Tianhan cuixiu bo* (天寒翠袖薄, 'Beauty in Du Fu's Poem', 1944) (Fig. 37), and scenes from the *Nine Songs* (Fig. 33).<sup>732</sup> The period from 1927 to 1944 was the most prolific time of Xu Beihong's artistic career, and incorporated the aforementioned three periods during which his creation of history paintings was at its height. Besides the history paintings mentioned above, Xu Beihong also produced some other ink paintings on the theme of historical anecdotes between 1927 and 1944, such as *Huai Su Learning Calligraphy on Banana Leaves* (1937) (Fig. 43), *Jing Shisanniang* (荆十三娘, 'The Heroine Jing Thirteen', 1938) (Fig. 161), and paintings on Zhong Kui.<sup>733</sup> These anecdotal paintings were smaller in scale and were executed with expressive ink brushstrokes in the style of traditional Chinese painting. Xu Beihong had been diligent and productive during his time in Europe from 1919 to 1926. But it was not until after 1927 when he moved back to China that he started to create a large quantity of paintings representative of his personal and mature style.

History painting had brought Xu Beihong unprecedented fame as the father of modern Chinese painting.<sup>734</sup> But it also brought criticism. For example, the

<sup>731</sup> Xie and Jiang, *Xu Beihong – Zhongguo Xieshi zhuyi de dianjizhe*, p. 94.

<sup>732</sup> Hua, *Xu Beihong de Zhongguo hua gailiang*, pp. 66-67. For a detailed list of Xu Beihong's artistic activities and works during this period, see Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, pp. 57-276.

<sup>733</sup> After 1944, Xu Beihong started to suffer from health problems. Cho Shenko, *Xu Beihong yanjiu* 徐悲鴻研究, 'A Study on Xu Beihong' (Taipei, 1989), p. 89.

<sup>734</sup> Li Yu 李渝, 'Cong Eguo dao Zhongguo – Zhongguo xiandai huihua li de minzu zhuyi yu xianjin fengge' 從俄國到中國 – 中國現代繪畫裡的民族主義與先進風格, 'From Russia to China – Nationalism and Avant-Garde in Modern Chinese Painting', *Xiongshi meishu* 雄獅美術, 137 (1982), pp. 38-67 (p. 62).

art history scholar Wen Fong argued that Xu Beihong's *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* and other paintings, which combine Chinese subject matter and Western chiaroscuro modelling and perspective techniques, do not fulfil the aim of reforming Chinese art. He pointed out that, "For although he [Xu Beihong] was a competent draftsman of individual figures, he failed in his attempt to depict many figures in one composition. His attempt to master the technique of Western realism with Chinese brush and ink appears to have been precluded by what Norman Bryson characterizes as the fundamental bifurcation of the two traditions of representational painting".<sup>735</sup> Michael Sullivan also had similar opinions with reference to Xu Beihong's history painting. He commented on Xu Beihong's first large-scale oil painting, *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers*, that, "Although the theme is Chinese, the handling is typical of the Salon painting in the late nineteenth century, well composed and utterly lacking in any true sense of the drama of the moment. The same atmosphere of conventional correctness and lack of dramatic feeling informs in his later historic compositions, such as the equally admired *Awaiting the Deliverer* of 1933".<sup>736</sup> Nevertheless, these two paintings have been highly acclaimed in China as Sullivan had described in his comment.

Fong and Sullivan's criticism of Xu Beihong's history paintings draws attention to the hybridity nature of his works, involving the composition, the medium and the subject matter. Xu Beihong had started creating history paintings as early as 1922 when he made the drawing *Putting the Finishing Touch to the Picture of a Dragon*, but *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* was the first completed history painting in oils. *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* illustrates the story of the disaffected hero *Tian Heng* from *The*

<sup>735</sup> Fong, *Between Two Cultures*, p. 96.

<sup>736</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, p. 70.

*Biography of Tian Tan* (*Tiantan liezhuan* 田儋列傳), which was written by the historian Sima Qian (司馬遷, ca 145-90 BC) in the *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (*Shiji* 史記). Tian Heng was the prime minister of the Qi nation, and he committed suicide after refusing to surrender himself to the Han Empire.<sup>737</sup> Xu Beihong depicted the moment of Tian Heng waving farewell to his followers before he committed suicide. In the painting, Tian Heng stands on the right of the picture. He is wearing a red robe and has a sword strapped around his waist. The scabbard of the sword is painted in turquoise and gold, making a contrast to the red robe. This contrast of colours makes Tian Heng and his sword the focus of visual attention and implies the next action that the protagonist is going to take. The application of red, gold and turquoise, with the white horse behind Tian Heng, also endows Tian Heng with a noble air, making him stand out distinctly from the other figures in the picture. There are 32 people in the picture in total, and 28 of them are crowded into the left half. Many of them are barefoot and stripped to the waist, revealing that they live in exile. The backdrop of sea and blue sky indicates that the location of this tragic event is on an island. The exaggerated vanishing perspective makes the figures in the picture stand out as if they are on a stage. This composition is often seen in the works of the nineteenth-century French academicians, such as Bastien-Lepage's *Potato Gatherers* (Fig. 120). The composition also brings an anecdotal interest to the picture, reminiscent of the genre painting *The Accident*, made by Xu Beihong's teacher Dagnan-Bouveret in 1879 (Fig. 162). Reconstructions of historical stories or ancient legends in the form of genre painting were popular among the French academicians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>738</sup> It is this

<sup>737</sup> Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Translated from the Shih Chi of Ssu-Ma Ch'ien*, trans. Burton Watson (London and New York, 1968), Vol. I, pp. 245-251.

<sup>738</sup> Nochlin, *Realism*, pp. 23-33.



kind of composition which demonstrates its effect in Xu Beihong's history paintings.

The theatrical effect in *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* remains obvious in Xu Beihong's next large-scale oil painting, *Awaiting the Deliverer*. This painting illustrates the chapter 'The Announcement of Zhonghui' (*Zhonghui zhi gao* 仲虺之誥) of *Shangshu* (尚書, 'The Book of History'). This announcement praised the feat of Chengtang (成湯, ?-1588 BC), the first king of the Shang Dynasty (17<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century BC), to rescue people from the tyrannical regime of other kings.<sup>739</sup> In the painting, a group of seventeen people is gathered in the centre of the picture, gazing into the distance as if they are eagerly waiting for something or someone to come. The unbarren farm-land without any grass growing and with trees with dried leaves on them represents a drought-stricken landscape. All the children in the picture are naked and several young men are wearing only loincloths, implying that they live in destitution. The baskets which some women are carrying are clearly empty, reinforcing their miserable situation due to the poor harvests. Illustrating this ancient historical scene in the form of a drought suggests that Xu Beihong's inspiration may have come from another version of this story which is recorded in *The Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子). The Chinese Confucian philosopher Mencius (ca 371-288 BC) quoted 'The Announcement of Zhonghui' to answer a question posed by King Xuan of Qi (*Qixuanwang* 齊宣王) about whether it was a moral act to invade another kingdom. Mencius drew on *The Book of History* to advise King Xuan that benevolence was the best form of government. Mencius quoted 'The Announcement of Zhonghui' in the following terms: "When he [Chengtang] pursued his work in the east, the rude tribes on the west murmured. So did those

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<sup>739</sup> For a Chinese/English version, see Luo Zhiye 羅志野 trans., *Shangshu* 尚書, 'The Book of History' (Hunan, 1997), pp. 324-331.

on the north, when he was engaged in the south. Their cry was – ‘Why does he put us last?’ Thus, the people looked to him, as we look in a time of great drought to the clouds and rainbows”.<sup>740</sup>

In addition to the elder who is standing in the centre of the picture, the woman who is sitting on the ground on the lower left side with two children in her arms easily attracts the viewer’s attention. The smaller child is suckling at the woman’s breast. This composition is similar to that in Delacroix’s *The Massacre at Chios* of 1824 (Fig. 163). On the lower right side of *The Massacre at Chios*, Delacroix painted a woman lying on the ground, nursing a child. *The Massacre at Chios* is made with a sensual touch, full of bright colour and dynamics. The composition of *Awaiting the Deliverer*, however, is more rigid, with all its parts unified by the brown tone representing in the painting a solemn atmosphere. Although each individual figure is painstakingly rendered, the picture does not reach the level of photographic verisimilitude which those of the nineteenth-century academicians often did. Rather, the composition and handling demonstrates a closer association with the visual language of Western Classicism, which corresponds to Xu Beihong’s version of Realism, which has been studied in Chapter 4. For Xu Beihong, realism is more a pictorial practice with emphasis on form-likeness than a school of painting. So although Xu Beihong is regarded as the most representative practitioner of Western Realism in China, his painting does not represent the visual effect of photographic verisimilitude which was pervasive in the French academic realism of his day; neither does his painting reveal a self-critical sense of Realism outside the Academy, of which Manet was the most representative leader. On the contrary, Xu Beihong often betrays an inclination for classicism with reference to realism and this perspective is also

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<sup>740</sup> James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes: Vol. II, The Works of Mencius* (Oxford, 1895), pp. 170-171.

embodied in his history paintings. Some scholars therefore argue that Xu Beihong's preference for classicism made his style closer to that of Courbet.<sup>741</sup> This point of view in large measure corresponds to Xu Beihong's own view of the French Realists. Xu Beihong held opposing attitudes towards the two acclaimed masters of Realism, Courbet and Manet. While deploring Manet's paintings as 'vulgar and shameless', Xu Beihong praised Courbet's works as 'composed and profuse'.<sup>742</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4.1, the bitter self-critical attitude and the more provocative nudes in Manet's paintings resulted in Xu Beihong's hatred of his works.

Another large-scale painting which Xu Beihong executed between 1928 and 1932 is *Jiufang Gao*. The story of *Jiufang Gao* was derived from the chapter *Shuofu* (說符, 'Explaining Conjunctions') of the ancient Taoist text *Liezi* (列子), which was compiled around the fourth century.<sup>743</sup> This work reveals Xu Beihong's aspirations to execute a large-scale history painting with traditional Chinese ink and brush. Its inscription demonstrates how much effort Xu Beihong had put in its making, as it says that this painting is the seventh version of this theme. In the picture, a black horse occupies the centre. Its appearance of the movement marks a contrast to other horses which are standing still on the left hand side. *Jiufang Gao* is depicted as an elder standing on the right. He and the black horse are looking into each other's eyes as if *Jiufang Gao* is measuring the inner quality, rather than the outside appearance, of the horse. According to the historical text, *Jiufang Gao* was a horse-judging master, famous for his extraordinary ability to discern the inner quality of a horse without being misled by its appearance. However, the black horse in Xu Beihong's painting clearly

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<sup>741</sup> Jiang and Xie, *Xu Beihong – Zhongguo jindai xieshi huihua de dianjizhe*, p. 89.

<sup>742</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 32.

<sup>743</sup> Hua, *Xu Beihong de Zhongguo hua gailiang*, pp. 70-71.

looks superior to the others. Although Xu Beihong's representation was contradictory to the historical text, in which the best horse Jiufang Gao found looked very ordinary at first sight, Xu Beihong may have tried to overcome this contradiction by depicting a kind of mutual spiritual comprehension between the elder and the black horse.

Another painting of Jiufang Gao which was executed in 1927 makes it clear that Xu Beihong had started to create this theme as early as the spring of 1927 (Fig. 164). This 1927 version depicted only Jiufang Gao, the black horse, the groom and one of Jiufang Gao's two servants, the central part of the 1931 version, without the other additions and the landscape background. These two versions of Jiufang Gao provide a glimpse into the trajectory of Xu Beihong's development of this theme into a narrative history painting in the form of a traditional handscroll. Moreover, a draft sketch for *Jiufang Gao* shows how hard Xu Beihong tried to depict this theme and the process by which he transformed the visual language of Western oils into Chinese pictorial paradigms (Fig. 165). In the draft, the composition and interaction between Jiufang Gao, the horse and the groom are different from those in the finished version of 1931. The bulk of the figures and the horse, the perspective and the format in the draft all show a closer association with Western painting, although Xu Beihong produced his picture with Chinese brushes. The lifelike rendering of the figures and the horse demonstrates Xu Beihong's solid grounding in drawing. Moreover, its diagonal composition, which produces more theatrical and perspective effects, reminds us of the drafts which the students at École de Beaux-Arts often made to prepare their entries for the competition of the Prix de Rome (Fig. 166).<sup>744</sup> Unlike the finished version, the composition of the *Jiufang Gao* draft seems more similar to

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<sup>744</sup> Weisberg, *Against the Modern*, pp. 29-46.

that of the drawing *Qin Qiong maima* (秦瓊賣馬, 'Qin Qiong Selling His Horse') (Fig. 167). *Qin Qiong Selling His Horse* is not dated, although Xu Beihong's chronology states that he did a drawing of *Qin Qiong Selling His Horse* in 1931.<sup>745</sup> Besides, Xu Beihong mentioned in 'Unresolved Doubts' that in 1928 he asked the candidates who sat the examination held by the KMT to execute a painting on the historical story of Qin Qiong Selling His Horse.<sup>746</sup> Accordingly, Xu Beihong may have started to conceive this subject no later than 1928. The story of Qin Qiong Selling His Horse is recorded in the *Shuo Tang* (說唐, 'The Tales of Tang'), which is said to have been written by the Ming novelist Luo Guanzhong, and also in the *SuiTang yanyi* (隋唐演義, 'The Historical Romances of the Sui and Tang Dynasties'), written by Chu Renhuo (褚人穫, ca 1635-1706).<sup>747</sup> The story describes how Qin Qiong, an official of the Sui Empire, once had to sell his horse to pay off his debts. Xu Beihong in his drawing depicted the moment of farewell between Qin Qiong and his horse after it was sold and was being taken away from him. Qin Qiong is pictured sitting at a table on the left side. He is turning his back to his horse while he waves farewell to it; the horse is looking at Qin Qiong as it is being taken away by a soldier. The feelings between Qin Qiong and his horse are visualised in their interaction. The composition, which is full of movement and theatrical effects, is similar to that of the drawing of 1922, *Putting the Finishing Touch to the Picture of a Dragon* (Fig. 46). The search for a theatrical effect is often seen in Xu Beihong's early works, such as the *Slave and Lion* (Fig. 80). This kind of composition demonstrates the influence of French academic training upon Xu Beihong. Although Xu Beihong only executed a few works in the style of Western

<sup>745</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 82.

<sup>746</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, p. 141.

<sup>747</sup> Luo Guanzhong, *Shuo Tang* (Hong Kong, 1960), pp. 24-29. Chu Renhuo, *SuiTang yanyi* (Shanghai, 1981), pp. 55-61.

historical genre painting during his stay in Europe, he absorbed the elements of Western history painting diligently and then strived to nationalise them in his later creations of Chinese paintings on themes taken from ancient histories and classical literature.

Xu Beihong showed a consistent preference for horses in his paintings. The horse had been a favourite subject for Chinese court and professional painters, whose works often served as the inspiration for Xu Beihong's creations. Considering together the three horse paintings which Xu Beihong executed in different periods of his career epitomises the different stages of creation that he had been undergoing. The first horse painting, *Three Horses* of 1919 (Fig. 62), is easily reminiscent of the works of the Qing court painter Lang Shining, who is well-known for his hybrid style which combines Western realistic technique and Chinese brushstrokes (Fig. 63).<sup>748</sup> *Qin Qiong Selling His Horse*, which was executed in the 1920s, represents the influence of French academic training upon Xu Beihong. *Jiufang Gao* and other large-scale history paintings of the early 1930s mark to a large extent the culmination of Xu Beihong's exhaustive efforts to create a new style of Chinese painting with the aid of Western pictorial language. The hefty style and anatomic precision with which the horses in the *Jiufang Gao* and *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* paintings are depicted obviously come from the numerous horse drawings that Xu Beihong made during his period in Europe (Fig. 168). By comparison, Xu Beihong's paintings of the 1910s followed the paradigms of traditional professional painting. After he went to Europe, he turned to Western pictorial modes, in particular that of French academic realism, for his creation of history paintings. Nonetheless, most of the drawings of the historical genre of the 1920s maintain to a certain extent the

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<sup>748</sup> The association between Xu Beihong and Giuseppe Castiglione's horse paintings was discussed in Chapter 2.3.

influence of Chinese professional art and popular culture, which manifested itself in the anecdotal subjects and in the theatrical and entertaining effects in the drawings. In the large-scale history paintings of the late 1920s and 1930s, Xu Beihong was still depicting the heroes and sages of Chinese literature and history in Western pictorial language; meanwhile he was able to reduce the theatrical effects to seek a sense of the dignity of Western academic aesthetics in the paintings. In other words, Xu Beihong clearly found the way to visualise the nobleness and morality of art which he repeatedly stressed in his eloquent speeches and articles, such as the 'Doubts'.<sup>749</sup>

The making of *Jiufang Gao* represents the difficulties which Xu Beihong must have encountered due to "the fundamental bifurcation of the two [Chinese and Western] traditions of representational painting", as Bryson had marked. Western painting elements, such as modelling and perspective, have often been considered the opposite of non-figurative and flat Chinese painting. The *Jiufang Gao* may be seen as an answer that Xu Beihong tried to give to the question he posed regarding the shortcomings of Chinese painting, as in the article 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting'. From Xu Beihong's point of view, the inferiority of Chinese painting to Western art is largely because the Chinese pictorial instruments, such as the fragile paper and mineral pigments, constrained representation in Chinese painting.<sup>750</sup> To extend the pictorial possibilities of Chinese painting, Xu Beihong thus infused Western pictorial language and painting technique into Chinese historical subjects. The *Jiufang Gao* draft reveals Xu Beihong's efforts at carrying out his proficiency in Western life drawing using Chinese brushes. The finished version of the *Jiufang Gao* further demonstrates his aspirations to reform Chinese art with the aid of Western

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<sup>749</sup> For Xu Beihong's view of art in the 'Doubts', see Chapter 5.2.

<sup>750</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', pp. 40-41.

painting techniques, which he continued to pursue throughout his life.

*The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*, which was executed in both ink and oil versions, clearly discloses Xu Beihong's persistent endeavours to blend the fundamentally different styles of Chinese and Western painting. The paintings on this theme were made during Xu Beihong's visit to India in 1940. This is why some elements in the paintings, such as the elephants and the Indian figures, were inspired by the landscape of India. The oil version retained more of these exotic elements. The composition of these two versions is mostly identical, except for some changes in the background. For example, the elephants which are pulling the cart in the oil version are replaced by cattle in the ink painting. This change may have been an adjustment made to suit Chinese agricultural society. In addition to the cattle, the ink version also adds a huge elephant at the far left hand side. A strong man who is carrying a load of hay and vegetables on his shoulder is facing the elephant, appearing to feed it. His muscular figure is similar to another Indian-like robust man, who is portrayed in frontal view in the centre of the picture. These two figures are possibly modelled on the same Indian man, of whom Xu Beihong made several drawings (Figs. 169-170). These additions make the ink version appear longer and narrower in its format, which is closer to the form of a traditional Chinese hand scroll. Accordingly, the oil version may have been executed as a preparation for the creation of the ink version. Human figures which are portrayed in the different media of drawing, oil painting and Chinese ink produce varied effects. The volume and chiaroscuro which is created in charcoal and white chalk drawings seems much easier to transform an image into a Western oil painting than into a Chinese ink work. The quick-drying and transparent nature of traditional Chinese mineral pigment is a difficult medium in which to express the thick and modelled effects of Western



painting. So the effect of great strength which Xu Beihong represented by depicting vigorous workmen in his Chinese brush-and-ink paintings has not met with universal approval as is proved by the adverse opinions of Fong and Sullivan. Nevertheless, *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*, which is executed in different media, unfolds to us how much effort a Chinese artist has to make to create a new and hybrid Chinese painting.

In the West, the history painting of the Grand Manner has held the premier position in the hierarchy of academic art.<sup>751</sup> But its status was precisely the opposite in traditional Chinese art. Although paintings on historical themes were popular in China, they were either executed to cater for mass taste, or they belonged to the category of figure painting, the pictorial genre by which court or professional painters were able to make money. To elevate the status of history painting in Chinese art and to increase its cultural capital, Xu Beihong thus represented episodes from the authoritative books of Confucianism. Moreover, he added a sense of dignity to his history paintings by infusing into them the modes of the Western grand style. As a professional artist, Xu Beihong found in Western history painting the best vehicle for the elevation of his status and his professional painting. He turned to Western realistic painting to look for pictorial styles in accordance with the intelligentsia's scientific approach to China's crises in her encounter with the West. Moreover, he drew on the authority of Western academic theories to endorse the value of history painting in modern Chinese art. So the hybrid history paintings represented Xu Beihong's version of new Chinese painting. Furthermore, the hybrid style served as a strong weapon to

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<sup>751</sup> For the hierarchy of paintings in the French academic aesthetics, see Linda Walsh, 'Charles Le Brun, "Art Director of France"', in Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham eds, *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp. 86-123 (p. 93). Grand Manner refers to an idealised painting style which incorporates visual metaphors and classical art elements to represent noble qualities. Its theory and practice had been formulated by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), the founder and the first President of the Royal Academy, in his *Discourses on Art*. See Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (New Haven and London, 1997).

build Xu Beihong's position and to exert his influence in China's art world.

## 6.2 Allegory

Xu Beihong's history paintings, in particular the large-scale works, have often been regarded as the most representative of patriotism in the wartime China. The tragic heroism of Tian Heng, who refused to surrender; the high hopes for being rescued in the *Awaiting the Deliverer*; the strong will of overcoming difficulties in *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*; all these spoke with the voice of the Chinese people who were suffering from political upheavals.<sup>752</sup> Xu Beihong was used to expressing his concern for the state of China in his works. In a female nude drawing, Xu Beihong inscribed on the far right hand side of it the words *Gemingjun de Jiujiang* (革命軍得九江, 'The revolutionary army took *Jiujiang*'), referring to the military victory of the KMT-led Nationalist Government in 1926, which was a significant event for the incipient united state of China (Fig. 171).<sup>753</sup> The drawings which Xu Beihong did during his stay in Europe seem to have often served as his diary. In addition to his patriotic mood, his poverty, diligence and friendship were also recorded in his drawings (Fig. 90). Most of these drawings bearing inscriptions about Xu Beihong's overseas experiences are female nudes, a subject matter which seems not to correspond with the artist's pensive mood. Inscribing poems or prose on paintings to express an artist's feelings about national or personal issues had been a typical practice among the traditional literati painters. Xu Beihong appears to have followed this practice in particular in his later brush-and-ink paintings. Take the ink painting *Chenqu* (晨曲, 'Morning Song', 1936) for example, the picture zooms in on some branches and twigs, on which many sparrows are resting (Fig. 172). The branches and twigs are outlined with fine

<sup>752</sup> Xie and Jiang, *Xu Beihong – Zhongguo Xieshi zhuyi de dianjizhe*, p. 94.

<sup>753</sup> For a brief account of the Northern Expedition, see Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pp. 341-348.

brush lines. Moreover, the sparrows are simply depicted with tones of black, white and ochre. Xu Beihong used only black and ochre tones to create a sense of space in the picture. The simple lines and colours in this picture render a refined atmosphere which the traditional literati art had been pursuing. Xu Beihong used colour so economically perhaps in order to create the impression of a lonely and cold season, as the inscription says: "Spring does not come". The gathering sparrows seem to be waiting eagerly for the delayed spring. The inscription apparently carries some connotations beyond the poetic picture. According to the year that this painting was made and its inscription, this painting must reflect Xu Beihong's sorrow for the approaching Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. During the eight years of the War, Xu Beihong made several ink paintings of this sort to express his patriotic feelings, such as the painting *Fushang zhi shi* (負傷之獅, 'Wounded Lion', 1938) (Fig. 173). In this picture, a fierce lion is depicted with fast and bold brushstrokes. It is turning away and seems to be seeing something with alarm in the direction of the east. The inscription, which says "The lion is wounded. At twenty-seven years old, the nation has suffered from the greatest disaster", apparently indicates that the lion refers to Republican China.

In 1938 when this painting was executed, Republican China was in its 27<sup>th</sup> year since its establishment in 1912. According to the connotations in the inscription, the lion looking in the direction of the east then appears more meaningful, because it suggests that the enemy of China is coming from the East. Xu Beihong also stated in the inscription that this painting was made to express his pensive mood in the face of national crises. Nevertheless, the piercing eyes of the lion also demonstrate Xu Beihong's strong confidence and high hopes for national victory. In Xu Beihong's paintings, the lion's ferocious features often

make this beast symbolic of an unyielding China. For instance, in the *Huishi Dongjing* (會師東京, 'Join Forces in the Eastern Capital', 1943), several lions gather together at the top of a mountain (Fig. 174). Xu Beihong chose lions as the subject for this painting possibly because of the identical pronunciation of the words for 'lion' (*shi* 獅) and 'force' (*shi* 師) in Mandarin. This painting represents Xu Beihong's high hopes for a significant turning point in China's fight against Japan. Only by breaking through the Japanese occupation of Burma was China able to obtain more foreign aid, in particular from the United States. Therefore, once China was able to join forces in the Eastern Capital – Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, this meant that China had broken her isolated state in the war and stood much more chance of victory.<sup>754</sup> This painting demonstrates Xu Beihong's passionate patriotism because he was keeping abreast of the latest national issues.

Lions and horses appear frequently in Xu Beihong's patriotic paintings. Horses are closely associated with the cavalry and with the battlefield. Consequently, they become an appropriate motif for paintings about war and patriotism. Xu Beihong was particularly fond of painting running horses. The vigorous movement of the running horse can well symbolise the high morale of the Chinese people in the wars. The *Aiming* (哀鳴, 'Plaintive Whine', 1942) is representative of this sort of painting (Fig. 1). In this picture, a horse is shown turning its back on the viewer and looking to the left with its mouth open. Its tail and mane are curved, painted with boldly-brushed ink daubs, as if blowing in the

<sup>754</sup> Hanoi was once named Tonkin, and its Chinese characters are '東京', identical to Tokyo. Therefore, articles often refer the 'Eastern Capital' in this painting to Tokyo. Hanoi and Kunming (昆明), the capital of Yunnan province of China were connected by the *Dianyue* (滇越) railway, which served as an important channel for China to import weapons and food during World War II until Japan occupied Vietnam. The Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia caused the seriously isolated state of China. So only by breaking Japan's blockade was China able to win the war. Accordingly, it will make more sense to associate the Eastern Capital with Hanoi than with Tokyo. For articles discussing this painting, see Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, p. 248; Cho, *Xu Beihong yanjiu*, p. 93; Hua, *Xu Beihong de Zhongguo hua gailiang*, p.120.

wind. The gesture of the horse with the quick and bold brushstrokes creates a sense of movement in the picture, which makes the horse look as if it has just stopped running or is just about to gallop. Although it is only created by simple brushwork, this horse painting vividly represents a mood which combines vigorousness and sadness, as is written in the inscription.<sup>755</sup> In another horse painting which was executed in 1943, Xu Beihong painted a horse lowering its head to graze (Fig. 175). This horse is also rendered with quick and free brushstrokes. The bold outline and the ink daubs are almost the same as in the earlier horse painting. The inscription says that Xu Beihong made this painting to celebrate China's victory in her battle with Japan in the Hubei (湖北) province, which temporarily allowed the Chinese people to live in peace. The horse, which appears to graze with ease, is symbolic of the contemporary state of China and her people. The horses in Xu Beihong's paintings are generally running, grazing or drinking water. These gestures on the one hand connote the high morale of the Chinese people and on the other hand they also symbolise the hardships that the Chinese people encountered during the wars. Xu Beihong's horse paintings do bear strong patriotic implications, but they also embody Xu Beihong's aspirations to reform the secluded and delicate paradigms of traditional Chinese painting, making them able to reflect the contemporary issues.

Besides horses and lions, pets, birds, fowls and flowers also become allegorical subjects in Xu Beihong's paintings. Take the *Zhuanglie de huiyi* (壯烈的回憶, 'Heroic Memory', 1937) for example: Xu Beihong painted a cockerel standing on a rock (Fig. 176). The cockerel seems to be crowing loudly with its beak wide open. Hugh sunflowers flourish in the lower half of the picture. The cockerel and the sunflowers, all rendered in bright colours such as yellow and

<sup>755</sup> The inscription says: "Recalling the battle, [the horse] whines, faces to the blue sky and stands firmly" (哀鳴思戰鬥，迴立向蒼蒼).

red, make this painting full of vitality. The spirited air in the painting seems not to coincide with the sentimental tone in the inscription, which says that Xu Beihong was saddened by the re-occurrence of the Sino-Japanese War. Although he was worried about Japan's increasingly violent invasions, Xu Beihong applied a bright tone to the painting to show that he was full of optimism for China's eventual victory. Fowls are often used in Xu Beihong's works as a metaphor for determination and hope. As early as 1928, Xu Beihong had designed a cockerel for the masthead of the *Modeng* supplement of the *Central Daily* newspaper (Fig. 131). This cockerel is standing on a rock and behind it the sun is about to rise. With its beak open, the cockerel is clearly crowing. The cockerel creates a hopeful and bright image which corresponds with the new and promising connotations which the term *Modeng* carries. In the first issue of *Modeng*, Xu Beihong also published an essay, *Geming geci sizhang* (革命歌詞四章, 'Four Chapters of A Revolutionary Song'), which he wrote in the summer of 1927. The Song told historical stories about chivalrous heroes and wise sages in troubled times.<sup>756</sup> These stories are visualised in Xu Beihong's history paintings, such as those described above.

From the 1930s, Xu Beihong gradually turned to the creation of Chinese brush-and ink paintings. They are mostly executed with expressive and hasty brushstrokes. Their subject matter is also typical, such as horses, magpies, cranes, willows and plum blossoms. Nevertheless, these brush-and-ink paintings do not endow Xu Beihong with a tranquil and disengaged image, the stereotype of the traditional Chinese painters. On the contrary, their rich allegorical meanings, which are often expressed in the accompanying inscriptions in the ink paintings, lead Xu Beihong to be considered as passionate and patriotic. By comparison,

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<sup>756</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, pp. 52-53.

inscriptions are often absent in Xu Beihong's history paintings, in particular those in oils. Even so it has been believed that Xu Beihong's history painting contains an allusion to nationalism, as David Wang remarked: "He must not have intended merely to recapitulate a moment from the distant past; instead, that reality made sense for him only when brought to bear on the historical moment of China of the late 1920s".<sup>757</sup> This is perhaps because Xu Beihong's allegorical ink paintings make a great contribution to his patriotic image, and this image in turn reinforces the association between Xu Beihong's history paintings and nationalism.

Xu Beihong was indeed a patriotic painter, and had proved his enthusiasm for national issues in the female nude drawings mentioned above, which he made before he started to create large-scale history paintings. In addition to this, his history paintings were mostly executed at times when nationalism was all-pervasive. For these reasons, it is hardly possible to look at Xu Beihong's history paintings without being aware of these associations. Instead, they are full of allegory and are closely associated with the contemporary social and national state in which he was working. Nevertheless, the association between Xu Beihong's history paintings and politics is so tight that it becomes difficult for other explanations to exist. Cho Shenko, in his lengthy treatise on Xu Beihong, refuted this sole patriotic reading of Xu Beihong's history paintings. He argued that Xu Beihong's large-scale history paintings, which have been acclaimed for their nationalist connotations, actually carry Xu's own aspirations. The *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* thus symbolised Xu Beihong's ambitions to visualise that historical moment, which had never been well represented by the former painters. The *Awaiting the Deliverer* symbolised Xu Beihong's ambitions

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<sup>757</sup> Wang, 'In the Name of the Real', p. 37.



to rescue degenerate Chinese painting. Furthermore, *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* symbolised Xu Beihong's determination to promote and insist on realism in China's art arena, where he believed that formalism had gradually dominated.<sup>758</sup> Xu Beihong's student Ai Zhongxin (艾中信, 1915-2003) recalled that Xu Beihong's creation of the *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* was in response to the question which Sima Qian posed at the end of the story.<sup>759</sup> Sima Qian explained that his motivation for recounting this historical story was because he was touched by the loyalty of those martyrs. Moreover, Sima Qian felt pity for the lack of illustrations of this story. He said: "Yet since they were all supposedly good at laying plans, why, I wonder, was there none who could think of a way to save this situation?"<sup>760</sup> Xu Beihong's creation of the *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* thus reveals that his principle ambition was to create a great Chinese painting to demonstrate his capacity as an outstanding new Chinese painter. Moreover, the integrity in this story should also be a motivation for Xu Beihong, because the didactic and moral history paintings could educate people, and thus develop the foundation of 'illumination' which Xu Beihong regarded as the essence of real art in his article 'Unresolved Doubts'.<sup>761</sup> Therefore, Xu Beihong's history painting may be political, but only within a cultural context. In other words, Xu Beihong should subordinate political meanings to artistic significance in his history paintings. Xu Beihong's history paintings, which combine the refined craftsmanship and spatial illusionism of Western painting with Chinese historical anecdotes, are apparently intended to emulate French academic practices to create a

<sup>758</sup> Cho, *Xu Beihong yanjiu*, p. 91.

<sup>759</sup> Ai Zhongxin, *Xu Beihong yanjiu* 徐悲鸿研究, 'A Study on Xu Beihong' (Shanghai, 1981), p. 50.

<sup>760</sup> Sima, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, Vol. I, p. 251.

<sup>761</sup> Xu, 'Huo zhi bujie', p. 135.

grand-manner Chinese painting. By means of invoking the authority of the French Academy, Xu Beihong executed history paintings to realise his ambitions to be a great painter in China. On the other hand, the grand manner, which was used because it was closely bound to governmental and academic taste in the West, made Xu Beihong's Chinese paintings in the grand style bound to bear allegories related to nationhood.

The grand style and idealised beauty in Xu Beihong's paintings were criticised by Xu Beihong's peers for a lack of nationalist rhetoric. Tian Han, Xu Beihong's colleague at the South China Art Academy, remarked that Xu Beihong avoided picturing the real world literally in pursuit of idealised beauty in his works, although he claimed to be a Realist.<sup>762</sup> Tian Han criticised the impoverished and starving people depicted in Xu Beihong's *Awaiting the Deliverer* for not being convincing. What Xu Beihong cared about was actually picturesque Realism. Tian Han's comments do to a certain level coincide with Xu Beihong's point of view – the best art work is based on pictorial realism but should ultimately go beyond it to achieve idealised beauty, as discussed in Chapter 4.2. The writer Xie Bingying (謝冰瑩, 1906-2000) also shared a similar point of view with Tian Heng when she visited Xu Beihong's exhibition in 1935. She praised Xu Beihong's paintings because they were not executed simply for the sake of art; even so they still did not depict the social reality sufficiently.<sup>763</sup> These remarks demonstrate that the pursuit of art still comes before political concerns in Xu Beihong's history paintings.

Other than their patriotic implications, Xu Beihong's paintings which

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<sup>762</sup> Tian Han, 'Women de ziji pipan – women de yishu yundong zhi lilun yu shiji' 我們的自己批判 – 我們的藝術運動之理論與實際, 'Our Self-Criticism – the Theory and Practice of Our Art Movement', in Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>763</sup> Xie Bingying, 'Beihong de hua' 悲鴻的畫, 'Beihong's paintings', in Wang, *Xu Beihong pingji*, pp. 221-223.

connote his own aspirations are also manifest in his brush-and-ink paintings. The paintings which are entitled *Chenyin* (沉吟, 'Rumination') should be among those that best represent Xu Beihong's self-reflection and aspirations. The two paintings with the same title of *Rumination* were made in 1932 and 1936 (Figs 177-178).<sup>764</sup> Their composition is similar. The space of the pictures is almost completely occupied by towering cypresses, which are depicted with hastily brushed ink daubs. There is only one tiny human figure – very possibly Xu Beihong himself – either standing to face the huge trees or turning his back to them. He seems to be in meditation. The poetic inscription on the two paintings is identical, saying: "Since when were heaven and earth collapsed, leaving it to witness the past and present? The dynamic overtones of a lifetime gather here for me to contemplate".<sup>765</sup> The 1932 version was executed when Xu Beihong was staying with Hu Shi in Beijing. In the letter which Xu Beihong wrote to Wu Zhihui, he said that it was a delight to be able to stay safe and to talk with friends about national crises in Beijing.<sup>766</sup> With regard to the context of the 1932 *Rumination* painting and the image of destruction in the inscription, this painting has often been seen as Xu Beihong's confession of his patriotism. In February 1932, Xu Beihong went up to Beijing because the Japanese invasion of Nanjing caused the National Central University to close temporarily.<sup>767</sup> Nonetheless, the enduring nature of the cypresses is very possibly an allusion to Xu Beihong's self-expectation. In 1936, when one of the *Rumination* paintings was executed, large-scale Sino-Japanese conflict was about to break out. Many artistic activities were suspended because of the foreign invasion and interior political upheavals.

<sup>764</sup> For a list of the titles and inscriptions in Xu Beihong's painting, see Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, pp. 213-221.

<sup>765</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 130.

<sup>766</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, p.104.

<sup>767</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, p.104.

At this time, many activities in which Xu Beihong participated demonstrated that how to continue the development of Chinese painting in wartime and how to make art serve national needs became central elements of Xu Beihong's career.<sup>768</sup> Besides, from the late 1920s, Xu Beihong had triggered several disputes with some well-known figures in the artistic and literary fields. The battlefield in the 1929 National Art Exhibition was the most famous of these, and the bitter dispute between him and Liu Haisu over their relationship and learning backgrounds was another.<sup>769</sup> In the light of these difficulties that Xu Beihong had encountered, the poetic inscription of the *Rumination* paintings thus very possibly projected Xu Beihong's own situation rather than being a metaphor for national crises. Nevertheless, these paintings with allusions to self-portraiture are not completely detached from political significance. The *Rumination* paintings were created at moments when Xu Beihong was filled with patriotic passion. Xu Beihong's turn to brush-and-ink Chinese painting is also seen as a response to the upsurge of nationalism in the 1930s.<sup>770</sup> Patriotism is an integral part of Xu Beihong's allegorical paintings. However, what concerned Xu Beihong most throughout his life was always art – how to reform Chinese art and how to create a new Chinese painting. Although Xu Beihong was a patriot, the significance of his paintings should not be pinned down to the merely political.

Xu Beihong demonstrated his aspirations not only through the self-reflective paintings, but also by means of his paintings which had special meanings for friends, such as the horse painting of 1938, which was inscribed to Qi Baishi (齊白石, 1864-1957) to celebrate the birth of Qi Baishi's son (Fig.

<sup>768</sup> For a detailed list of Xu Beihong's career in 1936, see Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, pp. 164-176.

<sup>769</sup> For a detailed study of the 1929 National Art Exhibition, see Chapter 5. Xu Beihong published two statements in 1932 to announce that he was not Liu Haisu's student and to refute Liu's regarding him as the practitioner of Academism. For the statements published by Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu over these issues in 1932, see Wang, *Xu Beihong wenji*, p. 52.

<sup>770</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', pp. 129-130.

179). The running horse in the picture symbolised Xu Beihong himself, who wished to have been able to run to celebrate with Qi Baishi in person. Xu Beihong also made paintings in collaboration with other painters, such as with Qi Baishi in the *Gamecocks* of 1947 and with Wang Yachen in the *Cat and Goldfishes* of 1946 (Figs 180-181). These paintings not only exhibited Xu Beihong's friendship with other painters but also demonstrated his wide connections in the art world. In the 1920s, Xu Beihong portrayed in oils several influential cultural and artistic figures of the earlier generation, such as Kang Youwei, Chen Sanyuan and Ren Bonian (Figs 137-139). These oil portraits show that Xu Beihong seemed eager to claim a position in the art field by portraying these eminent figures to endorse his accomplishments. By comparison, Xu Beihong's later ink paintings revealed his affiliation and interaction with contemporary artists. It was clear that Xu Beihong had successfully entered the art arena and actively accumulated his cultural capital through affiliation. Xu Beihong followed the social practice among the traditional scholar painters, which was disguised under the amateurism of their literati painting.<sup>771</sup> Moreover, Xu Beihong infused rich layers of allegories into his ink paintings. Combined with Western realistic techniques, as is clear in the anatomically-precise beasts and animals in his ink paintings, Xu Beihong added to the brush-and-ink painting genre which traditionally favoured a reclusive taste the earthy function of reflecting social reality. On the other hand, by combining both traditional and modern cultural capital – ink painting and Western realism – Xu Beihong quickly built his fame in both traditional and Western areas of China's art world. In September 1930, the *Shibao Pictorial* published Xu Beihong's ink painting and remarked that Xu Beihong was among the most accomplished Western-style

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<sup>771</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559* (London, 2004).

painters in China and that he had recently turned to the creation of national painting.<sup>772</sup> In June 1931, the *Beichen Pictorial* (北晨畫報) published Xu Beihong's horse paintings and the accompanying commentary expressed high regard for Xu Beihong's achievements in both Western and Chinese painting.<sup>773</sup> In 1935, Xu Beihong was hailed as "the leader of the world of Chinese painting" (*Zhongguo huatian zhi xiandao* 中國畫壇之先導).<sup>774</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 68.

<sup>773</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 77.

<sup>774</sup> Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong nianpu*, p. 108.

### 6.3 Modernity

When Xu Beihong's *Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers* and *Awaiting the Deliverer* were exhibited in 1930, they were highly acclaimed as "the first sign of Renaissance in Chinese art".<sup>775</sup> According to Mayching Kao's study, Xu Beihong's *Jiufang Gao* and *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* sought to "revive the grandeur of Chinese figure painting of Han (202 BC-220 AD) and Tang (618-907) times".<sup>776</sup> Xu Beihong also tried to transform *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* into a mosaic wall painting, using the form of the traditional brick reliefs and wall paintings popular in the Han and Tang periods. This programme was suspended half-way through because of a lack of official support.<sup>777</sup> These remarks and activities demonstrated that Xu Beihong intended to create a new Chinese painting through the modernisation and rejuvenation of the realistic traditions of Chinese art, and figure painting was at the centre of his reform programme. In his first article which touched on the reformation of Chinese painting in 1918, Xu Beihong had criticised the rigid and unrealistic depiction in Chinese figure painting because painters lacked any facility in three-dimensional modelling.<sup>778</sup> Chiaroscuro modelling and a good knowledge of anatomy in Western figure painting therefore served as the most suitable vehicle for Xu Beihong to modify the shortcomings in Chinese figure painting and to create a new golden age of Chinese painting in modern times.

As discussed in Chapter 2, figure painting had been traditionally regarded as the genre from which professional and commercial artists, such as Xu Beihong, made their living and thus it had held a lower position in the hierarchy

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<sup>775</sup> Zi Tian 紫天, 'Xu Beihong de hua' 徐悲鴻的畫, 'Paintings of Xu Beihong', *Zhongyang ribao*, 24 January 1930; It is also collected in Wang, *Xu Beihong pingji*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>776</sup> Mayching M. Kao, *China's Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937*, unpublished Dphil dissertation (Stanford University, 1972), p. 155.

<sup>777</sup> Cho, *Xu Beihong yanjiu*, p. 106.

<sup>778</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', pp. 44-45.

of Chinese painting, which favoured amateurism. However, the realistic features of figure painting matched the call of twentieth-century intellectuals for a new pictorial technique to render contemporary China and to strengthen her national character.<sup>779</sup> So the realistic strain of Chinese painting was re-valued and was considered to be the kind of Chinese painting which was able to compete with materially-advanced Western art. This comparative and global view had been centred on Xu Beihong's strategies towards the modernisation of Chinese painting since the 1910s. In his 1926 speech 'On Ancient and Modern, Chinese and Western Art – A Speech Given at Datong University', Xu Beihong reviewed the development of Chinese painting from a global angle. As far as current Chinese painting was concerned, Xu Beihong argued, bird-and-flower painting was the best, landscape painting was the second best, and figure painting was the worst, because there were no masters of figure painting in China nowadays.<sup>780</sup> Xu Beihong went further and judged the accomplishments of the historically-acclaimed figure painters in a global light too. He listed the masters of figure painting in Chinese history such as Yan Liben (閻立本, ?-673), Wu Daozi (吳道子, 680-759), Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫, 1254-1322), Qiu Ying, Chen Hongshou, Ren Bonian and Wu Youru. Although their achievements were approved by their compatriots, in Xu Beihong's eyes their skills were not good enough to compete with their international counterparts.<sup>781</sup> Xu Beihong criticised the way that Wu Daozi's superstitious attitude caused him to create wrongly-proportioned Indian deities in his works. He also criticised Chen Hongshou's formularised handling of the figures in his paintings, such as the way that beauties were all depicted with wide jaws, that figures were dressed

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<sup>779</sup> See Chapter 2-4.

<sup>780</sup> Xu, 'Gujin Zhongwai yishulun – Zai Datong daxue jiangyanci', p. 101.

<sup>781</sup> Xu, 'Gujin Zhongwai yishulun – Zai Datong daxue jiangyanci', p. 101.



without regard to the seasons, and that his figures were all painted narrow-eyed (Fig. 182).<sup>782</sup> However, the importance of the realistic traditions of figure painting cannot be ignored in the modernisation of Chinese painting. In his article on the modern renaissance of Chinese art, Xu Beihong argued that modern Chinese painting should rejuvenate the grand traditions, as epitomised in the great artworks in the Buddhist caves.<sup>783</sup> To improve the defects of traditional realistic painting and at the same time to restore its grand manner, Xu Beihong therefore concluded that pictorial realism and Chinese classicism was the key to the reform of Chinese painting, making it comparable with Western art in the modern era.<sup>784</sup>

This proposal for the modernisation of Chinese painting is embodied in Xu Beihong's history painting, which combines Western life drawing and Chinese classical figure painting. The vigorous figures in *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* and their movements are reminiscent of the energetic workmen in the brick reliefs of the Han dynasty (Fig. 183). Compared with the silhouetted figures with little indication of volume in the brick reliefs, the figures in *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* are heavily modelled and in this way they demonstrate the painter's anatomical knowledge and the skills he had obtained from life-drawing practice. The sketches for *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* also make it clear that the figures in the picture are modelled after real people (Figs 169-170). With the aid of Western life drawing, the muscular figures in *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain*, which are reminiscent of Buddhist sculptures and of the robust figures in Michelangelo's paintings, embody Xu Beihong's aspirations to create a grand and

<sup>782</sup> Xu, 'Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa', p. 44.

<sup>783</sup> Xu, 'Fuxing Zhongguo yishu yundong', p. 547.

<sup>784</sup> Xu, 'Gujin Zhongwai yishulun - Zai Datong daxue jiangyanci', p. 103.

realism-oriented modern Chinese painting. Moreover, the anatomical precision of the figures in *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* demonstrated a scientific attitude which had been considered to be the essential vehicle for China's modernisation.

For Xu Beihong, modern Chinese painting aimed to revive the realistic traditions of professional painting and, at the same time, should represent a scientific and energetic ethos to symbolise modern China. As a result, many of Xu Beihong's paintings shared a great similarity in composition with the works of Ren Bonian and Wu Youru, the artists whom Xu Beihong enthusiastically acclaimed as the only authentic painters in the world of Chinese art in the past three hundred years.<sup>785</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2.2, several of Xu Beihong's history paintings are apparently inspired by those of Ren Bonian. Although there is a correspondence between Xu Beihong and the professional painters' works in terms of composition and subject matter, Xu Beihong's works demonstrate a further influence of Western learning. The figures in Xu Beihong's paintings are portrayed with more care for painstaking technique and anatomic precision. In addition, the commercial and anecdotal taste in Ren Bonian's paintings is replaced by a more solemn and erudite manner in Xu Beihong's works. It appears that Ren Bonian is the most influential Chinese painter on Xu Beihong's career. In addition to figure painting, Ren Bonian's influence upon Xu Beihong's output is also seen in the paintings on themes such as cats, fowls and birds. Cats are often seen in Xu Beihong and Ren Bonian's works (Figs 184-185). By comparison, Ren Bonian was obviously more interested in the playful use of Chinese brush and ink, whereas Xu Beihong cared more about the anatomic precision of the cat. Besides, cats in Xu Beihong's paintings are also employed to

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<sup>785</sup> Xu, 'Fuxing Zhonguo yishu yundong', p. 548.

serve as a satire on Chinese people's cowardice when confronted with national crises, such as Japan's violent invasion (Fig. 186).<sup>786</sup> To modernise Chinese painting, Xu Beihong drew on the genres popular in professional painting and represented them in a more invigorative manner by infusing into them the Western pictorial techniques. He also replaced the traditionally commercial and entertaining taste of professional painting with a nationalistic rhetoric.

As discussed in Chapter 2.4, the scholar-amateur painting had been regarded by Xu Beihong and other reform-minded intellectuals as the major cause of the degeneration of Chinese painting in modern times. So in Xu Beihong's eyes, modern Chinese painting should reverse the entrenched art-historical orthodoxy which prioritised the amateur Southern School and should revalue the grandeur of the professional Northern School. In terms of the difference between the artisan Northern School and the scholarly Southern School, Xu Beihong indicated that the elegant and small pieces of the Southern School were only sufficient to please but were unable to inspire awe. On the contrary, the thorough craftsmanship of the Northern School could depict something overwhelmingly magnificent and vigorous, something as great as Michelangelo's paintings or Beethoven's music.<sup>787</sup> Xu Beihong not only represented this grandeur in his figure and history paintings, but also infused this feature into his bird-and-flower genre. Xu Beihong made many magpie paintings in the 1930s and 1940s. The arrangement of the magpies and branches in his work is reminiscent of the bird-and-flower painting of the Song court style (Figs 187-188). These magpie paintings demonstrate Xu Beihong's opinions of the modern renaissance of Chinese art. He argued that the modern Chinese renaissance should first regenerate figure painting and then executed as good

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<sup>786</sup> Hua, *Xu Beihong de Zhongguohua gailiang*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>787</sup> Xu, 'Faguo yishu jinkuang', p. 73.

bird-and-flower paintings as the Song artists had done.<sup>788</sup> Compared with the graceful Song birds which are rendered with fine brushwork and rich layers of colours, the robust birds which are depicted with bold brushstrokes and ink in Xu Beihong's work reveal a vigorous intention. Although the magpies are depicted with free and expressive brushwork, their sturdy shapes and varied gestures create a spatial sense in the pictures, demonstrating that the painter must carefully observe and directly draw them first. Xu Beihong's vigorous magpie painting is reminiscent of Ren Bonian's bird-and-flower painting (Fig. 189). The robust mynas and the bold brushwork clearly reveal Ren Bonian's influence upon Xu Beihong. Nonetheless, Ren Bonian's brushwork is bolder than Xu Beihong's. Although the spatial sense and the sturdy birds also exist in Ren Bonian's painting and demonstrate his knowledge and practice of Western drawing, how to represent a painter's attitude towards ink and brush is still the priority of concern in Ren Bonian's creation. In other words, Ren Bonian was clearly more concerned about how to represent his accomplishments in ink and brush through his depiction of the mynas. By comparison, for Xu Beihong, ink and brush largely served as tools just like the Western pencil and chalk, to render the volume and shape of the magpies. Although Ren Bonian and Xu Beihong's paintings shared a great similarity, Xu Beihong's bird-and-flower painting has stepped closer towards modernisation because of its evident break with and intended reform of the traditions.

In addition to revaluing the significance of professional painting in the modernisation of Chinese art by reviving its realistic techniques and grand features, Xu Beihong also reformed literati painting by strengthening its visual intensity. For example, in the painting *Plum Blossom* painting (Fig. 190), Xu

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<sup>788</sup> Xu, 'Fuxing Zhongguo yishu yundong', p. 549.

Beihong created a mighty effect in the picture by painting the tree trunk with epigraphic brushstrokes and filling the space of the picture with numerous twigs. He clearly intended to create a sense of visual intensity in the picture by removing the remote feeling that literati painting had often given to the viewers. Moreover, Xu Beihong left an inscription on the upper right side of the picture, in which he wrote to his wife about his life and career in the wartime capital of Chongqing. Xu Beihong accused literati painting of causing the degeneration of Chinese painting in the modern era. He reformed it by replacing its sketchy and graceful brushwork with the heavy and epigraphic strokes of the Northern School, continuing the reformation of Southern-style elegant painting and calligraphy which had been carried out by artists and intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. This enthusiasm for epigraphy had a broad influence in the cultural field of the nineteenth century.<sup>789</sup> Influenced by Kang Youwei, Xu Beihong had demonstrated his penchant for the calligraphy of the Northern School in the early stages of his career.<sup>790</sup> At the same time, Xu Beihong also retained the typical practices of literati painting in his works, such as leaving long inscriptions, executing paintings for social connections and creating simply for amusement. Nonetheless, the practices of literati painting in Xu Beihong's work were frequently employed to express his concerns and feelings towards national crises rather than to reveal a secluded mind, as traditional scholars had done. The plum tree, which was among the secluded motifs of literati painting, thus turns stout in Xu Beihong's works and enables the viewer to visualise more earthy issues. Through the creation of a new style of literati painting, Xu

<sup>789</sup> For the epigraphic movement in Chinese painting and calligraphy at the turn of the twentieth century, see Stephen Little ed., *New Songs on Ancient Tunes: 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy from the Richard Fabian Collection* (Honolulu, 2007).

<sup>790</sup> Chen Chuanxi 陳傳席, 'Xilun Xu Beihong de yishu' 析論徐悲鴻的藝術, 'A Analysis of Xu Beihong's Art', in *Xu Beihong huihua quanji*, Vol. I, pp. 7-27 (pp. 22-23).

Beihong played the roles both of an accomplished painter and a Chinese intellectual who frequently worried about the future of his nation. His aspirations may be well crystallised in his *Pine* painting (Fig. 191). The calligraphic brushwork and the accompanying poem put this work in the style of literati painting. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong employed the bold and heavy epigraphic brushstrokes of the Northern School to paint and thus added a sense of intensity to the pictures. In the painting, Xu Beihong inscribed a poem written by Chen Sanyuan. The poem describes the enduring feature of the pine tree, which still stands firmly after thunderbolts. Chen Sanyuan used the pine tree to symbolise a scholar's virtue, which had to be brave to resist the tyrannical regime.<sup>791</sup> The subject matter and the enduring feature of the pines are reminiscent of Xu Beihong's *Rumination* paintings, which were also executed at this time (Figs 177-178). As discussed before, the *Rumination* paintings represented Xu Beihong's patriotic passion and his self-expectation. Considering the similar context of the creation of both the *Pine* and the *Rumination* paintings, the *Pine* painting thus also carried rich layers of allegory. Chen Sanyuan was a radical Qing scholar, and Xu Beihong may have invoked his poem to symbolise his own reformed attitude towards traditional Chinese painting. As discussed in Chapter 4.3, Xu Beihong had executed several portraits of Chen Sanyuan from the late 1920s. These paintings not only demonstrated Xu Beihong's ambitions to build his fame in the art world through multi channels, but also manifested his aspirations to be the modern heir to the Chinese culture.

Xu Beihong aimed to create a modern Chinese painting style which combined the realistic and grand style of professional painting as well as the allegorical and intellectual features of literati painting. Besides reviving the good

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<sup>791</sup> For the poem, see Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, p. 108.

traditions, Xu Beihong also turned to Western art to look for those elements which could further improve these traditions to make them more suitable for modern times. The three paintings on the same theme of pine and cranes may exemplify Xu Beihong's efforts in the modernisation of Chinese painting. Cranes and pines carry multiple implications and are popular in traditional Chinese painting. For example, both crane and pine symbolise longevity and thus serve as an auspicious motif popular in professional painting. Also the pine is symbolic of Confucian virtue, and the crane is emblematic of secluded life. So they often appear in literati painting as well, such as Wen Zhengming's painting *Qin he tu* (琴鶴圖, 'Zither and Crane') (Fig. 192). One of Xu Beihong's *Pine and Cranes* paintings was made as a gift to celebrate Peng Hanhuai's (彭漢懷, 1876-1952) birthday (Fig. 193). Xu Beihong employed the bold and heavy brushstrokes of epigraphic calligraphy to replace the fine and coloured brushwork which had been used to depict this auspicious motif by professional painters, such as Lang Shining and Tang Dai (唐岱, 1673-?) (Fig. 194). Xu Beihong used the epigraphic calligraphic brushwork to depict the subject matter perhaps in response to Peng Hanhuai's achievements as a famed seal cutter. With calligraphic brushwork, Xu Beihong turned this popular and auspicious motif into an object of cultural capital and of the social practices of the literati circles. In another *Pine and Cranes* painting which was executed in 1938, Xu Beihong also employed the epigraphic calligraphic brushwork to render the subject and the brushstrokes were even thicker (Fig. 195). Although the images look schematic because of the calligraphic brushstrokes, the bold lines and the cropped pine trunks create a sense of intensity in the picture in complete opposition to the remote feeling which traditional scholar-amateur calligraphic painting, such as Wen Zhengming's work, usually leaves to the viewer. In addition, the watchful gaze

of the cranes adds more tension to the painting in response to the inscription, which speaks of Japan's invasion. Its vigour brings the traditionally secluded motif to reflect mundane and national issues. The third painting, which was executed in 1932, reveals how Xu Beihong managed to create a three-dimensional space in the picture with the calligraphic brushstrokes (Fig. 196). The towering cypress and the relatively horizontally growing pine create a spatial sense in the painting. The gestures of the trees are reminiscent of that which Xu Beihong drew from the natural scene on his trip to the Western Hills in 1918 (Fig. 78). The painstaking and fine lines in the 1918 painting follow the conventional practices of traditional professional painting and the commercial watercolour painting of early twentieth-century Shanghai. They are replaced with the epigraphic and bold strokes in this 1932 painting. Although the trees look more schematic with the calligraphic brushwork, Xu Beihong successfully retained the spatial sense in the 1932 painting. Moreover, the vigorous gestures of the trees and the interaction between the two cranes create a narrative feature in the painting; while the epigraphic calligraphy of the Northern School endows the painting with a grand air. The solemn and narrative feature of this painting is reminiscent of Xu Beihong's history painting. This 1932 painting *Songbo shuanghe tu* (松柏雙鶴圖, 'Pine, Cypress and Two Cranes') may well exemplify the idealist painting, the best artwork in Xu Beihong's terms, which should be based on painstaking realism.<sup>792</sup> It also visualises Xu Beihong's version of modern Chinese painting, which should be grand, realistic and idealistic. Since Cai Yuanpei advocated replacing Confucianism with fine arts after the imperial regime collapsed, the question of which kind of Chinese painting should be created or kept to be symbolic of modern China had been a central issue among

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<sup>792</sup> For Xu Beihong's definition of idealism and realism, see Chapter 4.2.



artists and intellectuals. The painting *Pine, Cypress and Two Cranes* provides a glimpse into Xu Beihong's version of modern Chinese painting. In addition to combining the merits of both Chinese and Western painting, Xu Beihong aimed to elevate Chinese painting from the artisan or amateur level to be an intellectual art, which was able to reflect, symbolise and shape modern China. Xu Beihong's paintings based on painstaking Western realism had earned him fame as early as the 1920s, nonetheless, it was his national-style paintings which led to his eminent status in the art world after the 1930s. Zong Baihua, in his article *Xu Beihong yu Zhongguo huihua* (徐悲鴻與中國繪畫, 'Xu Beihong and Chinese Painting', 1935), expressed his very high regard for Xu Beihong's modern Chinese painting for its combination of Chinese and Western realisms and its simultaneous retention of the spiritual features of traditional Chinese painting. Xu Beihong's national painting was thus highly acclaimed by Zong Baihua as the supreme guide for the modern renaissance of Chinese art.<sup>793</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> Wang, *Xu Beihong nianpu changbian*, pp. 107-108.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion – The Making of a Hero

In the 1930s, Xu Beihong's fame continued to grow. Unlike his withdrawal from the 1929 National Art Exhibition to demonstrate his artistic stance, Xu Beihong was able to organise the exhibition of modern Chinese painting (*Exposition d'Art Chinois Contemporain*) which took place at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris in 1933.<sup>794</sup> Besides being a principal organiser of this Exhibition, Xu Beihong also had the responsibility for arranging the objects on display. This exhibition featured a display of 10 paintings by the Qing painters, such as Yu Zhiding, Ren Bonian, and his own father, Xu Dazhang; and 181 paintings by 75 artists of the Republican era, including the renowned traditional painters Qi Baishi, Huang Binhong and Wu Hufan (吳湖帆, 1894-1968); as well as Westernised artists such as Lin Fengmian, Liu Haisu, Zhang Yuguang, Wang Yachen and Xu Beihong himself, to name but a few. The Qing paintings featured works by the realistic, professional and commercial artists, whose status was traditionally disvalued. As regards the modern section, Xu Beihong put in fifteen of his own paintings, whereas his contemporaries Lin Fengmian only had two works and Liu Haisu had just one on display.<sup>795</sup> This exhibition projected Xu Beihong's version of modern Chinese painting, which revered realism. With this emphasis on realism, Xu Beihong was intending to replace traditionally literati orthodoxy with professional genealogy, reaffirming the legitimacy and prestige of his origins and then his position in modern times. By comparison, the Chinese exhibition organised by Liu Haisu and held in Berlin in 1934 provided a slightly different version of modern Chinese painting from Xu Beihong's. It displayed 274 works by 163 artists, including deceased painters such as Ren Bonian, Jin

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<sup>794</sup> For this exhibition, see *Exposition de la Peinture Chinoise*, exhibition catalogue (Paris : Musée du Jeu de Paume, 1933).

<sup>795</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', pp. 134-135.

Cheng and Wu Changshuo.<sup>796</sup> Paintings of the latter two eminent traditional artists were absent from the Paris exhibition. This neglect of the works of renowned modern literati artists and of Liu Haisu and Lin Fengmian in the Paris exhibition brought some criticism from the artist and critic Li Jianwu (李建吾) and Qin Xunfu (秦宣夫). They approved Xu Beihong's artistic accomplishments demonstrated in his oil paintings and portraits. Nonetheless, they criticised his history painting *Jiufang Gao* as a failed attempt for art's sake, though it was a work filled with Xu Beihong's patience and passion for art.<sup>797</sup> The European Chinese painting exhibitions indicated the continuation of diversity and contest in China's art field, succeeding the energy and dispute of the 1929 National Art Exhibition. The difference is that Xu Beihong had acquired greater power to participate in setting new rules.

Besides modifying the traditional artistic orthodoxy through exhibition, Xu Beihong also participated in the historical writing of Chinese art, providing his own vision of Chinese painting history, in which realism was stressed. This construction of Chinese art history reached its pinnacle in the 1920s and 1930s, following the institutionalisation of fine art as a discipline in the national higher education system.<sup>798</sup> In the catalogue of the 1933 Paris Exhibition of Chinese Painting, Xu Beihong called Dong Qichang the builder of Chinese academism and referred to Ren Bonian as the great painter who broke away from this academic orthodoxy of Chinese painting.<sup>799</sup> With this contrast between realism and idealism in Western and Chinese artistic orthodoxy, Xu Beihong attributed

<sup>796</sup> Vainker, 'Exhibitions of Modern Chinese Painting in Europe, 1933-1935', pp. 556-557.

<sup>797</sup> Li Jianwu and Qin Xunfu, 'Bali Zhongguo huihua zhanlan' 巴黎中國繪畫展覽, 'The Chinese Painting Exhibition in Paris', *Wenxue* 文學, 1.5 (1933), pp. 658-675 (p. 668).

<sup>798</sup> Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, 'The Japanese Impact on the Republican Art World: The Construction of Chinese Art History as a Modern Field', *Twentieth-Century China*, 32.1 (2006), pp. 4-35 (p. 7).

<sup>799</sup> *Exposition de la Peinture Chinoise*, p. 16.

the decline of China in her visual art and national power in the modern era to her literati orthodoxy. Realism, which culminated in Ren Bonian's art, would be the correct direction for Chinese painting in the future. Xu Beihong delineated this perspective on Chinese art again in 1938. In the article 'On Chinese Painting', Xu Beihong referred to Tang painting as intellectualism and as the Renaissance of Chinese art; and Song painting, in particular the works of the academic painters, as the crystallisation of idealistic realism.<sup>800</sup> Yuan saw the flourishing of self-expressive and non-figurative painting. Xu Beihong praised this turn towards idealism on the grounds that it could refresh the dullness of Chinese painting which might succeed the pinnacle of realism in the preceding Song dynasty. Nonetheless, the succeeding Ming dynasty saw the degeneration of Chinese painting because idealism was further developed to the amateurism of literati painting and this became legitimised as orthodoxy. In Xu Beihong's eyes, the authentic modern Chinese painters whose paintings could bear comparison to Western modern art were Xu Wei (徐渭, 1521-1593), Zhu Da (朱耷, 1626-1705), Shi Tao, Chen Hongshou and Ren Bonian, all of whose art broke away from the mainstream of literati painting. Among these unconventional painters, the realistic Chen Hongshou and Ren Bonian received the greatest praise from Xu Beihong.

The article 'On Chinese Painting' demonstrates that Xu Beihong's perspective on Chinese painting had remained largely unchanged since he first expressed it in the 1918 article 'Methods for the Improvement of Chinese Painting'. The difference is in the breadth of angle that he took. In the 1918 article, Xu Beihong reviewed Chinese painting only in terms of its technique, and assumed his identity as a pure painter. In the 1938 article, however, he

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<sup>800</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Lun Zhongguohua'.

looked at Chinese painting from a more comprehensive standpoint, as an artist, historian and critic. The elevation of Song and Yuan painting and the denigration of Ming and Qing painting in Xu Beihong's articles seemed common in the heated art historical writing of this time. From the 1920s, several treatises on Chinese painting written by Japanese scholars and artists, including Ōmura Seigai, Nakamura Fusetsu (中村不折, 1868-1943) and Oga Seiun (小鹿青雲), had been translated into Chinese.<sup>801</sup> These publications inspired their writers' Chinese counterparts to formulate their own art history, such as Chen Shizeng, Pan Tianshou and Yu Jianhua. The historical framework of Pan Tianshou's book *Zhongguo huihua shi* (中國繪畫史, 'A History of Chinese Painting', 1926) shared great similarity with that of Nakamura and Oga's *Shina kaigashi* (支那繪畫史, 'A History of Chinese Painting', 1913), in which they praised the court painting of the Song and Ming periods, and saw Qing painting as the decline of Chinese art.<sup>802</sup> Teng Gu, who was among the earliest Chinese to obtain a PhD degree in art history in Berlin in 1932, employed the Western evolution theory to study Chinese art. In his book *A Concise History of Chinese Art* (1926), Teng Gu divided the development of Chinese art into four periods: birth and development (*shengzhang* 生長), intercourse (*hunjiao* 混交), flowering (*changsheng* 昌盛) and stagnation (*shuaitui* 衰退).<sup>803</sup> In his periodisation, Tang and Song stood for the time of flowering in Chinese art, while Ming and Qing represented the stage of stagnation. Chinese artists may differ in their attitude towards the modernity in literati painting, but they seemed to share a largely identical ideological position on the historical progression of Chinese art. Xu Beihong's creation of history paintings in pursuit of the grandeur of Tang art could be attributed to this

<sup>801</sup> Shao, 'Xixue "meishushi" dongjian yibainian', pp. 110-111.

<sup>802</sup> Andrews and Shen, 'The Japanese Impact on the Republican Art World', pp. 18-23.

<sup>803</sup> Teng, *Zhongguo meishu xiaoshi*.

contemporaneous esteem for Tang and Song painting in the discursive field. This upsurge in the literature of Chinese art history indicated a significant fact in that Chinese artists were taking back the predominance from the hands of the men of letters in the matter of the judgement of Chinese painting and were restoring the subjectivity of Chinese art with their indigenous versions of its history. Unlike his position as a passive recipient of artistic thought in the 1910s, Xu Beihong actively participated in shaping and guiding the direction of the art field in the 1930s.

The writing of Chinese art history increased to a large degree in accordance with the rising artistic nationalism in the 1930s. The alliance of traditional painters formed a mighty force in the art field. They continued the spirit of the early-twentieth-century national essence movement.<sup>804</sup> The traditional camp, just like the Westernised painters, also learnt from European and Japanese models to modernise traditional Chinese painting, but they did not allow Western learning to threaten the foundation and subjectivity of Chinese art. This call for the 'cultural construction of the Chinese base', which was announced in 1935, could be seen as China's protest against the long-term Imperialist invasion from the West and from Japan.<sup>805</sup> Xu Beihong's creation of history painting and his turn to traditional ink painting reflected his keen perception of and quick response to the latest milieu of the art field.<sup>806</sup> As discussed in Chapter 6, Xu

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<sup>804</sup> Chou Fangmei, 'Ershi shiji chu Shanghai huajia de jieshe yu qi dui shehui de yingxiang' 二十世紀初上海畫家的結社與其對社會的影響, 'The Formation and Impact of Art Associations among Shanghai Artists in the Early Twentieth Century', in *1901-2000 Zhonghua wenhua bainian lunwenji* 1901-2000 中華文化百年論文集, 'Essays on Chinese Culture Century 1901-2000' (Taipei, 1999), pp. 15-50 (pp. 20-34).

<sup>805</sup> Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', p. 134.

<sup>806</sup> For the anxiety of Westernised painters in the face of the continuing predominance of traditional painting and the rise of nationalism in China, see Shih Shou-Chien, 'Huihua, Guanzhong yu guonan: Ershi shiji qianqi Zhongguo huajia de yasu jueze' 繪畫、觀眾與國難：二十世紀前期中國畫家的雅俗抉擇, 'Painting, Audience and National Crises: Chinese Painters' Choice between Refinement and Vulgarly in the Early Twentieth Century', *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan*, 21 (2006), pp. 151-192.

Beihong's richly allegorical ink paintings and his history paintings with their patriotic implications brought an upsurge in his fame during the Second Sino-Japanese War. In 1948, after the War, Xu Beihong became the alternate supervisor of the Society of Chinese Painting (*Zhongguo huahui* 中國畫會), one of the largest associations of traditional painters, which had been established in 1932 and was suspended during the War.<sup>807</sup>

Xu Beihong's aspirations to legitimise the superiority of realism in Chinese painting may be best manifest in his revision of the 'six principles' (*liu fa* 六法), the authoritative standard for judging Chinese painting which was established by the sixth-century critic Xie He (謝赫).<sup>808</sup> Xu Beihong published *Xin qi fa* (新七法, 'New Seven Principles') in 1932, and in this article he replaced the old premier principle 'animation through spiritual resonance' with his new one 'proper placing' (*weizhi deyi* 位置得宜).<sup>809</sup> The traditional six principles emphasised first the 'spiritual resonance' and second 'the use of the brush' (*gufa yongbi* 古法用筆); the principle of 'proper planning in placing' (*jingying weizhi* 經營位置) came fifth. Now, however, Xu Beihong put 'proper placing' first, 'correct proportions' (*bili zhengque* 比例正確) second, and 'clear chiaroscuro' (*heibai fenming* 黑白分明) third. 'The use of the brush' was excluded completely and the principle of 'spiritual resonance' came last in his new set of seven principles. The traditional six principles had very obviously served as a powerful tool for the non-figurative and calligraphic tendencies of literati painting. Nonetheless, Xu Beihong's new principles put an emphasis on realism and demonstrated the intention to replace the traditional pictorial language of ink and

<sup>807</sup> Chou, 'Ershi shiji chu Shanghai huajia de jieshe yu qi dui shehui de yingxiang', pp. 30-32.

<sup>808</sup> For the six principles, see Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China* (California and London, 1999), pp. 95-96.

<sup>809</sup> Xu Beihong, 'Huafan xu - Xin qi fa' 《畫範》序 - 新七法, 'Preface to *The Models for Painting - Seven New Principles*', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 173-174.

brush with Western techniques, aiming to challenge the conventional authority which disvalued the realistic tendencies of professional painting.

Xu Beihong's new principles, which stressed a faithful version of reality and a solid grounding in drawing, very obviously followed the doctrines of the French art academy. These principles were visualised in his ink paintings, such as the vigorous dynamics, the three-dimensional sense, and the anatomically precise magpies created with white and black brushstrokes as discussed in Chapter 6.3 (Fig. 187). To modernise Chinese painting, Xu Beihong not only employed this new set of principles in his own works, but also used them as the guidelines for teaching art. During his leadership of the Art Department of the National Central University in the 1930s, Xu Beihong combined the previously separate Chinese painting and Western painting groups into a unified painting section.<sup>810</sup> On the one hand, this merger demonstrated the further adaptation of the foreign fine art framework into China; on the other hand, this move to a certain extent reflected Xu Beihong's intention to make drawing the essential training for both Chinese and Western painting. As discussed in Chapter 4.3, Chinese painting and Western painting were two separate subjects at art schools in early twentieth-century China. Drawing was largely fundamental only for Western painting, while imitation was for Chinese painting and was also widely included in the curriculum of other art subjects. The new seven principles could be seen as the perfect solution to Xu Beihong's concerns over how to improve Chinese painting. Xu Beihong embodied these principles in his paintings, and carried them out in art education to establish a 'new national painting' (*xinguohua* 新國畫) by making drawing an obligatory course for all freshmen and sophomores at the National Beijing Art College (later renamed as the Central

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<sup>810</sup> See Chapter 4.3.



Academy of Fine Arts). Students were not able to select a major until they had completed this fundamental training.<sup>811</sup> This curriculum which Xu Beihong conceived in 1947 was far different from the one in use at the beginning of the establishment of this school in 1918 (it was originally named the National School of Fine Art). At that time, imitation was far more popular on the school's curriculum.<sup>812</sup> Xu Beihong's radical move generated protests from the members of the 'Fine Art Association of Peking City' (*Beipingshi meishu xiehui* 北平市美術協會), but received great support from the Communist Party, the new government of China since 1949.<sup>813</sup> Xu Beihong's dedication to realism was held in high esteem by the new leaders of China, such as Mao Zedong (毛澤東, 1893-1976) and Zhou Enlai (周恩來, 1898-1976), and led directly to his appointment to the eminent position of director of the new country's primary art college, the Central Academy of Fine Arts (*Zhongyang meishu xueyuan* 中央美術學院). This college gathered a number of celebrated Realists and left-wing artists, including Dong Xiwen (董希文, 1914-1973), Wu Zuoren, Jiang Zhaohe, Ai Zhongxin, and Pang Xunqin, to name only a few. With government support, Xu Beihong was able to realise his ideals in respect of realism. As the art historian Li Chu-tsing has argued, 'Chinese social realism may be seen largely as a continuation of Xu Beihong's ideas and theories'.<sup>814</sup> There does actually exist a gap between the academic elegance in Xu Beihong's realism and the public taste for social realism which the Communist Party favoured. Hence, Xu Beihong's large-scale oil painting *Mao Zhuxi zai renmin Zhong* (毛主席在人民

<sup>811</sup> Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979*, p. 91. Xu Beihong, 'Xinguohua jianli zhi buzou' 新國畫建立之步驟, 'The Steps for Establishing the New National Painting', in Xu and Jin, *Xu Beihong yishu wenji*, pp. 529-532.

<sup>812</sup> Wu, *Qingmo mingchu de huihua jiaoyu yu huajia*, pp. 123-128. Also see Chapter 4.3.

<sup>813</sup> Lin, *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>814</sup> Li Chu-tsing 李鑄晉, *Trends in Modern Chinese Painting*, The C.A. Drenowatz Collection (Switzerland, 1979), p. 98.

中, 'Leader Mao with his People', 1950) was rejected by the Communist government at the exhibition in Russia because it still represented a particular intellectual inclination.<sup>815</sup> It is Xu Beihong's great legacy to China's art education that has won him his incomparable status in the Communist China.

When the Communist Party took over China in 1949, Xu Beihong's paintings also demonstrated an inclination towards social realism. The painting *Zai Shijie heping dahui shang tingdao Nanjing jiefang xiaoxi* (在世界和平大會聽到南京解放消息, 'On Hearing the News of Taking Over Nanjing at the Assembly for World Peace', 1949) described Xu Beihong's delight at the Communist victory (Fig. 197). This pictorial record of a significant moment to praise the ruler's great feats may be reminiscent of David's *The Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon I and the Crowning of the Empress Joséphine in Notre-Dame Cathedral on December 2, 1804* (1806-1807) (Fig. 198). This comparison provides a glimpse into Xu Beihong's alteration of his academic technique to fit the gradual dominance of social realism in China. This kind of highly political painting which Xu Beihong executed in the late stage of his career contributed a great deal to his incomparably prominent status in Communist China. At this time, the drawings of the new leader of China, Mao Zedong, the early leader of the Communist Party, Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白, 1899-1935), and the best-known left-wing artist, Lu Xun, continued to show the realistic craftsmanship and social practices that Xu Beihong had shown in his previous periods (Figs 199-200). These paintings demonstrate that Xu Beihong had the awareness and the ability to make this slight alteration in response to the different milieu in different periods. On the other hand, the change in Xu Beihong's art and fame brings to light how close the relationship between the

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<sup>815</sup> Lin, *Zhongguo youhua bainianshi*, p. 222.

political situation and the art field was in twentieth-century China.

It was the search for a solution to this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon that Xu Beihong's adherence to realism remained throughout his life, but that his identity and reputation appeared unsettled, that motivated this thesis. With the concepts of agent/agency and field, this thesis looks at Xu Beihong's loyalty to realism as both a habitus and a strategy. In this light, Xu Beihong's career reveals the dynamics between an artist and the art field: how he endeavoured to be a legitimate agent, how he challenged the canons, and how he in turn participated in the production of new restrictions in this field. Moreover, examining Xu Beihong in the context of the concrete social situations of his day unfolds the complicated intertwining of the West, nationalism and Chinese agency in the development of China's art field, which tightened the relationship between the art field and the field of power. In addition to his cleverness in adjusting himself to the rapid structural changes in the art field, Xu Beihong's legendary status in the pages of twentieth-century Chinese art also demonstrates the unique association of autonomy and heteronomy in China's art field. The formulation of Xu Beihong reflects the ambiguous and complex interaction between Western colonialism and post-colonial Occidentalism, which contributed to the vital reality of twentieth-century Chinese painting, and at the same time generated the dilemma of how to deal with its modernity.

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Left: Fig. 1 Xu Beihong, 'Plaintive Whine' (*Aiming* 哀鳴), 1942



Right: Fig. 3 Xu Dazhang, 'Coaching My Son under the Pine Shade' (*Songyin kezi tu* 松蔭課子圖), 1905



Fig. 2 Xu Beihong, 'Jiufang Gao' (*Jiufang Gao* 九方皋), 1931



Fig. 4 Xu Dazhang, 'Ten Views of Jingxi' (*Jingxi shijing* 荆溪十景), 1907





Fig. 5 Wang Yuanqi, 'Ten Views of West Lake' (*Xihu shijing tu* 西湖十景圖), undated



Fig. 6 Ren Xiong, 'Ten of Ten Thousand Paintings' (*Shiwan tu* 十萬圖), 1856



Fig. 7 Yu Zhiding, 'Portrait of Wang Yuanqi Appreciating Chrysanthemums' (*Wang Yuanqi yiju tu* 王原祁藝菊圖), undated



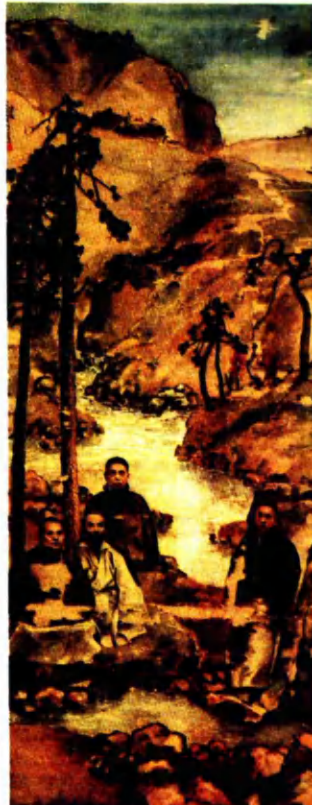
Left : Fig. 8 Anonymous, 'Portrait of Nobleman and Wife in a Garden Pavilion', 18<sup>th</sup> century



Right: Fig. 9 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of an Ancestor' (*Yingxiang* 影像), early-dated



Left: Fig. 10 Anonymous, 'Portrait of Mother Mujia', ca 1890



Middle: Fig. 11 Xu Beihong, 'The Elderly' (*Zhulao tu* 諸老圖), early-dated



Right: Fig. 12 Xu Beihong, 'Figures' (*Renwu* 人物), early-dated





Fig. 13 Xu Beihong, 'A Celebration for Kang Youwei's Sixtieth Birthday'  
(*Nanhai xiansheng liushi xingle tu* 南海先生六十行樂圖), 1916



Left: Fig. 14 Zhou Muqiao, 'Woman Standing by a Rock', 1914



Middle: Fig. 15 Zeng Jing, 'Portrait of Zhang Qingzi' (*Zhang Qingzi xiang* 張卿子像), 1622



Right: Fig. 16 Guan Qiaochang (Lamqua), 'Self-portrait of Lamqua at the age of 52'  
(*52 sui zihuaxiang* 52 歲自畫像), 1853



Left: Fig. 17 Qian Huian, 'Brewing Tea and Washing the Inkstone'

(*Pengcha xiyan* 烹茶洗硯), 1871



Right: Fig. 18 Ren Bonian, 'Zhong Kui Hacking a Fox'

(*Zhong Jinshi zhanhu* 鍾進士斬狐), 1878



Left: Fig. 19 Cao Hua, 'Instructing' (*Jiaozi tu* 教子圖)



Right: Fig. 21 'The Last Supper', woodcut print illustration from *Daoyuan jingcui*

(道原精萃 'Evangelicae Historiae Imagines')





Left: Fig. 20 Ren Bonian, 'Portrait of Wu Gan' (*Wu Gan xiang* 吳淦像), 1878

Middle: Fig. 22 Ren Bonian, 'Enjoying the Cool Shade of Banana Palms'

(*Jiaoyin naliang tu* 蕉蔭納涼圖), undated

Right: Fig. 23 Ren Xiong, 'Self-Portrait' (*Zihuaxiang* 自畫像), ca 1857



Left: Fig. 24 Xu Beihong, 'Purple Air Coming from the East' (*Ziqi donglai* 紫氣東來), 1943

Right: Fig. 25 Ren Bonian, 'Purple Air Coming from the East' (*Ziqi donglai* 紫氣東來),

1889





Fig. 26 Xu Beihong, 'Confucius Giving a Lecture' (*Kongzi jiangxue* 孔子講學), 1943



Left: Fig. 27 Ren Bonian, 'Three Friends' (*Sanyou tu* 三友圖), 1884



Right: Fig. 28 Chen Hongshou, 'Lady Xuanwen Jun Giving Instructions on the Classics' (*Xunwen Jun shoujing tu* 宣文君授經圖), 1638



Fig. 29 Xu Beihong, 'Three Chivalrous Warriors' (*Fengchen sanxia* 風塵三俠), 1920s



Fig. 30 Ren Bonian, 'Three Chivalrous Warriors' (*Fengchen sanxia* 風塵三俠), 1887



Left: Fig. 31 Ren Bonian, 'Three Chivalrous Warriors' (*Fengchen sanxia* 風塵三俠), 1880



Right: Fig. 32 Lu Peng, 'Three Chivalrous Warriors' (*Fengchen sanxia* 風塵三俠)





Left: Fig. 33 Xu Beihong, 'Mistress of Xiang' (*Xiang furen* 湘夫人), undated

Right: Fig. 34 Chen Hongshou, 'Mistress of Xiang' (*Xiang furen* 湘夫人), 1616



Left: Fig. 35 Xu Beihong, Tao Yuanming Picking Chrysanthemums

(*Caiju dongli tu* 採菊東籬圖), 1948

Right: Fig. 36 Chen Hongshou, 'Tao Yuanming Bringing Chrysanthemums Home'

(*Tao Yuanming zaiju tu* 陶淵明載菊圖), ca 1649



Left: Fig. 37 Xu Beihong, 'Beauty in Du Fu's Poem' (*Tianhan cuixiu bo* 天寒翠袖薄), 1944

Right: Fig. 38 Qian Huian, 'Beauty in Du Fu's Poem' (*Muyi xiuzhu* 暮倚修竹), 1896



Fig. 39 Tang Peihua, 'Beauty in Du Fu's Poem' (*Tianhan cuixiu bo* 天寒翠袖薄)

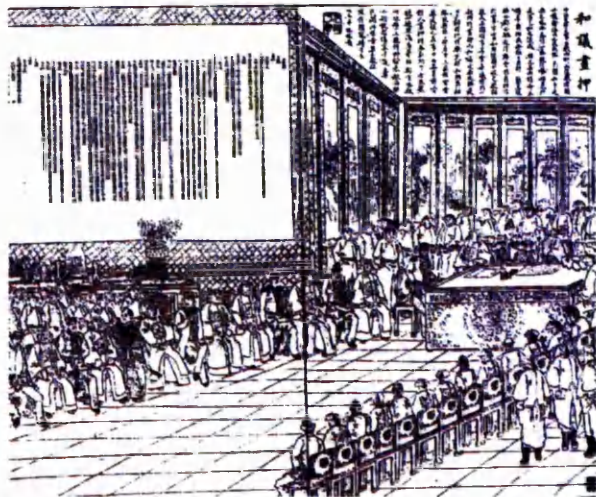
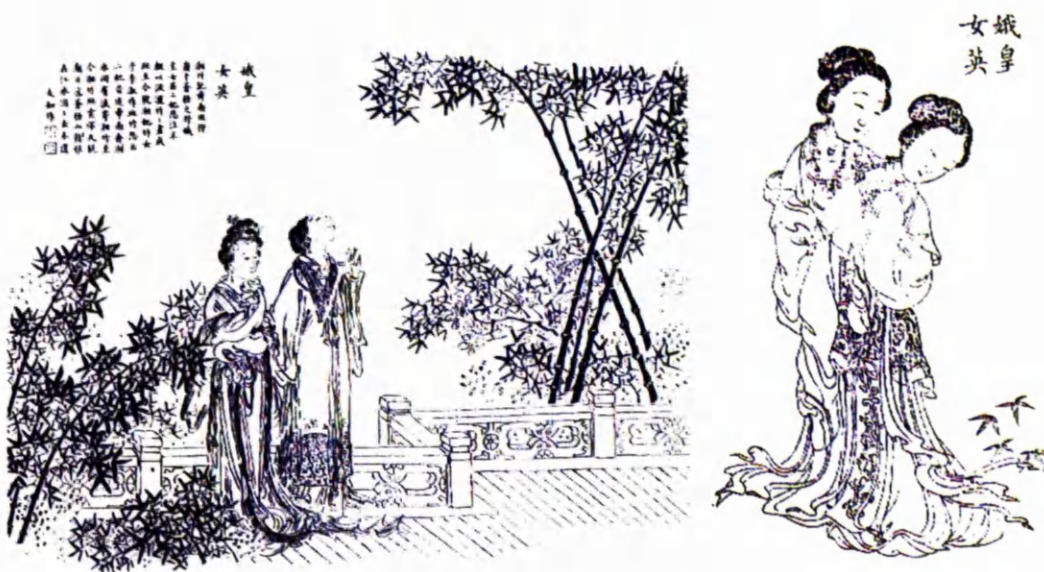


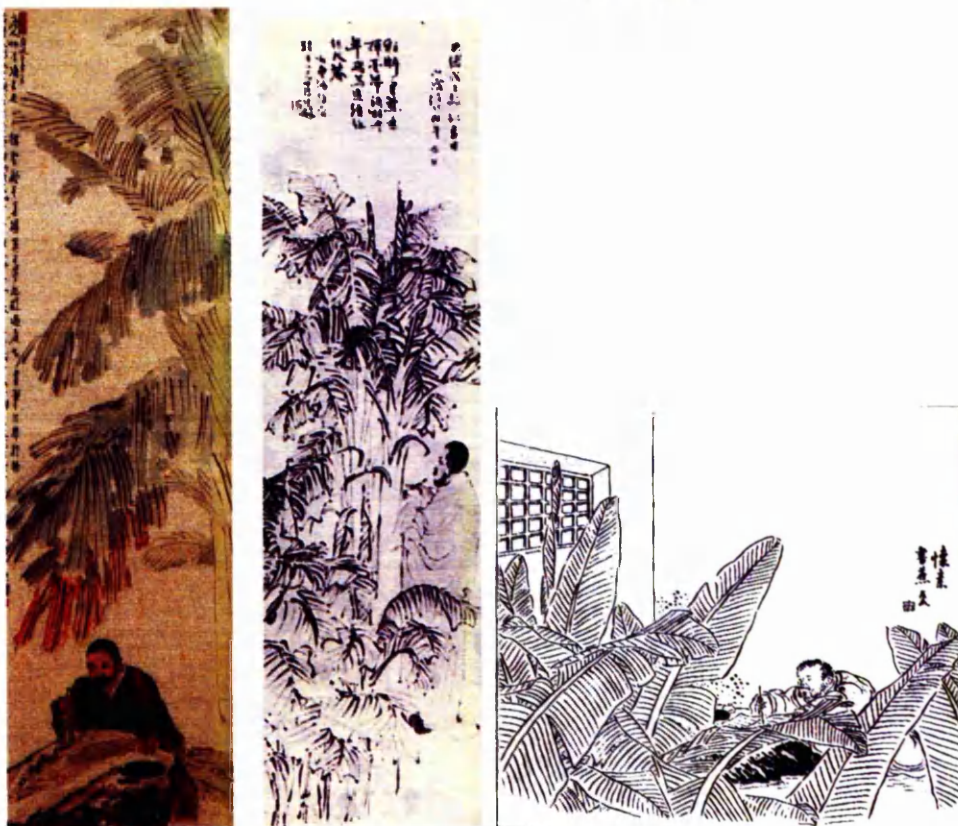
Fig. 40 'The Treaty-Signing Ceremony at the Conclusion of the Sino-French War'  
(*Heyi huaya* 合議畫押), 1885





Left: Fig. 41 Wu Youru, 'Erhuang and Nüying' (娥皇女英)

Right: Fig. 42 Wang Hui, 'Erhuang and Nüying' (娥皇女英)



Left: Fig. 43 Xu Beihong, 'Huai Su Learning Calligraphy on Banana Leaves'  
(*Huai Su xueshu* 懷素學書), 1937

Middle: Fig. 44 Ren Bonian, 'Huai Su Learning Calligraphy on Banana Leaves'  
(*Huai Su shujiao* 懷素書蕉), 1888

Right: Fig. 45 Wu Youru, 'Huai Su Learning Calligraphy on Banana Leaves'  
(*Huai Su shujiao* 懷素書蕉)





Fig. 46 Xu Beihong, 'Putting the Finishing Touch to the Picture of a Dragon' (*Hualong dianjing* 畫龍點睛), 1922



Fig. 47 Wu Youru, 'Putting the Finishing Touch to the Picture of a Dragon' (*Hualong dianjing* 畫龍點睛)



Fig. 48 Wu Youru, 'The Horse-judging Expert Bo Le' (*Bo Le xiang ma* 伯樂相馬)



Left: Fig. 49 Xu Beihong, 'Shi Qian Stealing Chickens' (*Shi Qian touji* 時遷偷雞), 1912

Right: Fig. 50 Zhang Chunhua in the role of 'Shi Qian Steals the Armour' (*Shi Qian toujia* 時遷偷甲)

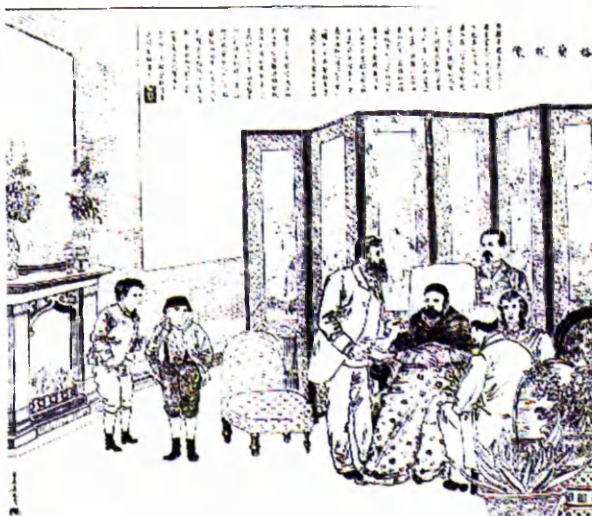


Left: Fig. 51 Du Zishun, 'Shi Qian Stealing Chickens' (*Shi Qian touji* 時遷偷雞),  
Illustration for a competition of *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報, 1912

Middle: Fig. 52 'A Young Man Has Been Beaten Up and Fallen to the Ground', Illustration  
for a competition of *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報, 1912

Right: Fig. 53 'A Child Passing Through the Central Hole of a Copper Coin', Illustration for  
a competition of *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報, 1912





Left: Fig. 54 Wu Youru, 'Portrait of General Grant' (*Gelantuo xiang* 格蘭脫像), 1885

Right: Fig. 55 T. de Thulstrup, 'General Grant's Illness – A Consultation', 1885



Left: Fig. 56 Zheng Mantuo, 'Evening Makeup' (*Wanzhuang* 晚妝), 1914

Right: Fig. 57 Wu Youru, 'Even I Feel Affection for You as I See You'

(*Wo jian you lian* 我見猶憐), 1983



Fig. 58 Photograph of Xu Beihong in the June 1919 issue of *Meishu* 美術



Left: Fig. 59 Zhang Yuguang, 'The Significance of Female Students'

(*Nüxuesheng zhi qingzhong* 女學生之輕重), 1909



Right: Fig. 60 Xu Yongqing, 'Studying Painting by Window'

(*Yunchuang duhua* 芸窗讀畫), 1915

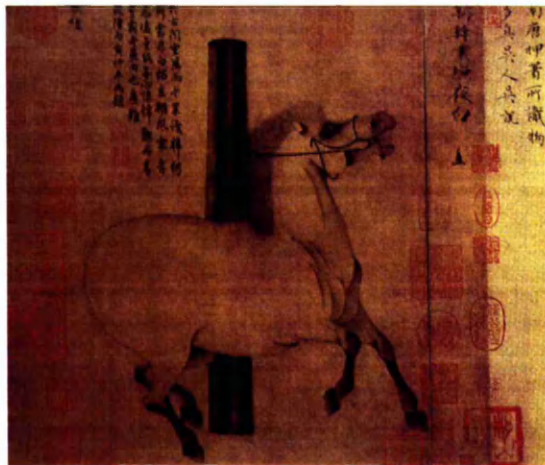


Fig. 61 Han Gan, 'Night-Shining White' (*Zhaoyebai* 照夜白), ca 750





Fig. 62 Xu Beihong, 'Three Horses' (*Sanma tu* 三馬圖), 1919



Fig. 63 Lang Shining, 'Herd Horses' (*Jiaoyuan muma* 郊原牧馬圖), undated



Fig. 64 Lang Shining, 'White Hawk and Glossy Ganoderma' (*Songxian yingzhi tu* 嵩獻英芝圖), 1724



Left: Fig. 65 Xu Beihong, 'Tiger' (*Hu tu* 虎圖), 1918



Right: Fig. 66 Gao Qifeng, 'Roaring Tiger' (*Xiaohu* 嘯虎), 1908



Left: Fig. 67 Gao Jianfu, 'Flying in the Rain' (*Yuzhong feixing* 雨中飛行), 1932



Right: Fig. 68 Zheng Mantuo and Gao Jianfu (inscription),  
'Silver Bank and Autumn Water' (*Yintang qiushui* 銀塘秋水), 1914





Fig. 69 Jin Guisheng, 'Chrysanthemum-Picking in the Xu Garden'  
(*Xuyuan caiju tu* 徐園採菊圖), 1890



Left: Fig. 70 Xu Beihong, 'Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers' (*Tiannü sanhua* 天女散花),  
1918



Right: Fig. 71 Poster of Mei Lanfang in the role of 'Celestial Maiden Spraying Flowers'



Fig. 72 Xu Beihong, 'Farewell My Concubine' (*Bawang bieji* 霸王別姬), 1931



Left: Fig. 73 Image of Cangjie (*Cangjie xiang* 倉頡像), *Yishu congbian* 藝術叢編, 1 (1916).



Right: Fig. 74 Image of Cangjie (*Cangjie xiang* 倉頡像), *Shenbao* 申報, 25 October 1917.





Left: Fig. 75 Yi Yuanji, 'Monkey and Cat' (*Hou mao tu* 猴貓圖), undated



Right: Fig. 76 Su Hanchen, 'Children Playing in the Autumn Garden'  
(*Qiuting yingxi tu* 秋庭嬰戲圖), undated



Fig. 77 Lin Zhuang, 'Fruit and Bird' (*Guoshou lai qin tu* 果熟來禽圖), undated



Left: Fig. 78 Xu Beihong, 'Old Pines and Cypressesses in the Western Hills'  
(*Xishan gu songbo* 西山古松柏), 1918

Right: Fig. 79 Xu Beihong, 'Fighting with a Lion' (*Boshi tu* 搏獅圖), 1910s

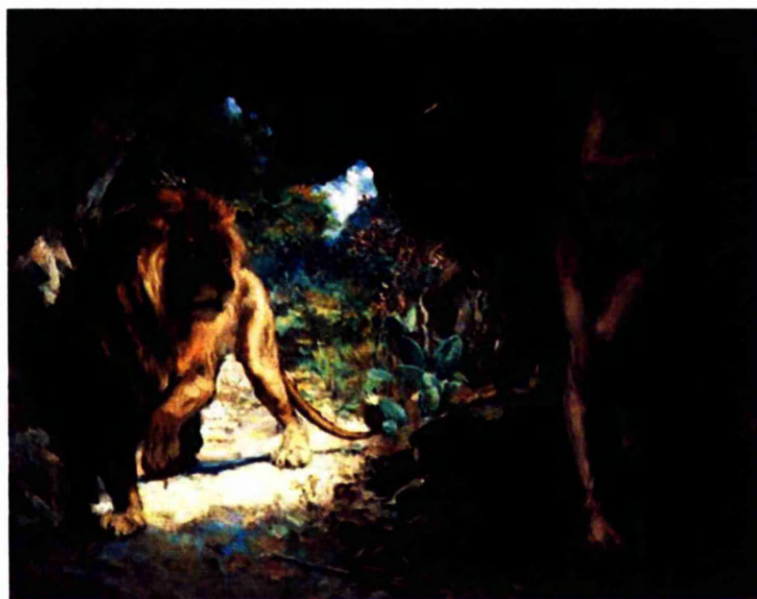


Fig. 80 Xu Beihong, 'Slave and Lion' (*Nuli yu shi* 奴隸與獅), 1924



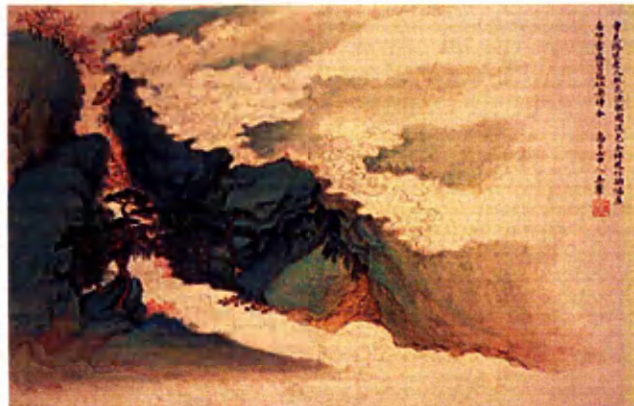


Left: Fig. 81 Chen Shizeng, 'Studying Painting' (*Duhua tu* 讀畫圖), 1917

Right: Fig. 82 Li Yishi, 'Zhang Chang Helping His Wife to Draw Eyebrows' (*Zhang Chang huamei* 張敞畫眉), undated



Fig. 83 Lai Jigeng, 'Landscape of the Western Hills' (*Xishan fengjing xiesheng* 西山風景寫生), ca 1918



Left: Fig. 84 He Lüzhì, 'Mountain-Water' (*Shanshui* 山水), 1918

Right: Fig. 85 Wang Hui, 'Fishing Boat in Peach Blossom' (*Taohua yuting* 桃花漁艇),  
Undated



Left: Fig. 86 Emile Auguste Carolus-Duran, 'The Convalescent', ca 1860

Right: Fig. 87 François Flameng, 'Madame Flameng', 1893





Fig. 88 Lin Fengmian, 'Humanity's Pain' (*Renlei de tongku* 人類的痛苦), 1929



Fig. 89 Xu Beihong, 'Tian Heng and Five Hundred Retainers'  
(*Tian Heng yu wubai zhuangshi* 田橫與五百壯士), 1928-1930



Fig. 90 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1925



Fig. 91 Jean-Léon Gérôme, 'The Death of Caesar', ca 1859-1867



Left: Fig. 92 Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret, 'Horses at the Watering Trough', 1884

Right: Fig. 93 Preparatory photograph for *Horses at the Watering Trough*, ca 1884



Left: Fig. 94 Xu Beihong, 'Drawing of Horse' (Ma 馬), 1940

Right: Fig. 95 Diego Velázquez, 'The Toilet of Venus', 1647-1651





Fig. 96 Xu Beihong, 'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes after Raphael', 1933



Fig. 97 Raphael, 'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes', 1515-1516



Left: Fig. 98 Photograph of Xu Beihong and Jiang Biwei, ca 1923



Right: Fig. 99 Chang Yu, 'Female Nudes in Pink' (*Fenhongse shuang luonü* 粉紅色雙裸女), ca 1928

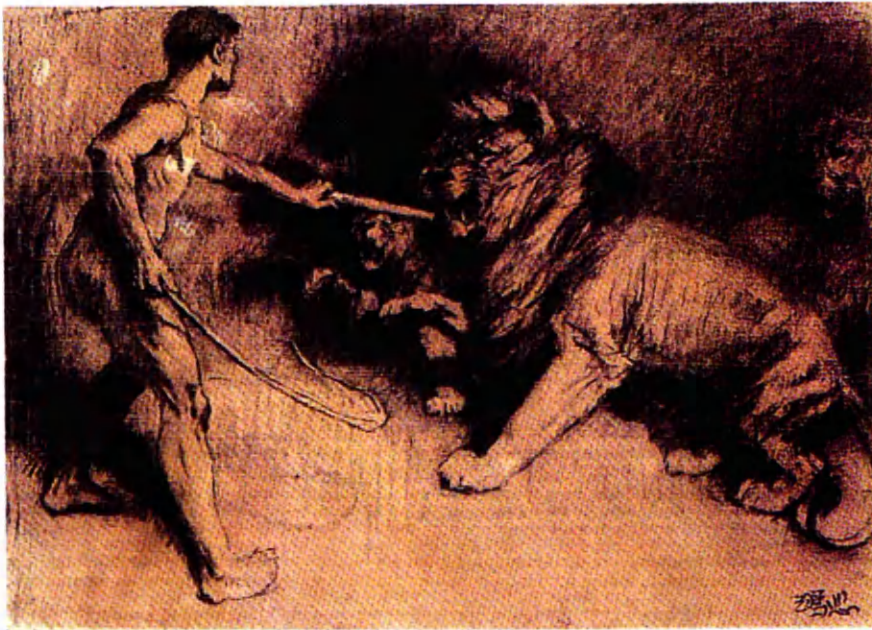


Fig. 100 Xu Beihong, 'Lions' (*Xunshi tu* 馴獅圖), ca 1922

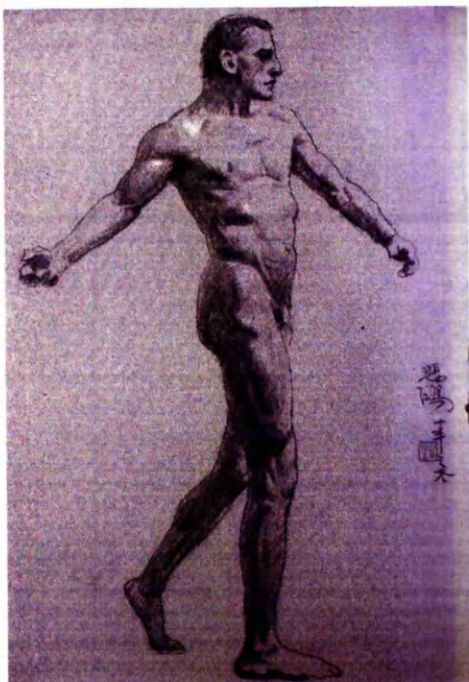


Left: Fig. 101 Chang Yu, 'Peony' (*Mudan* 牡丹), 1921



Right: Fig. 102 Xu Beihong, 'Drawing of Shao Xunmei' (邵洵美), 1925

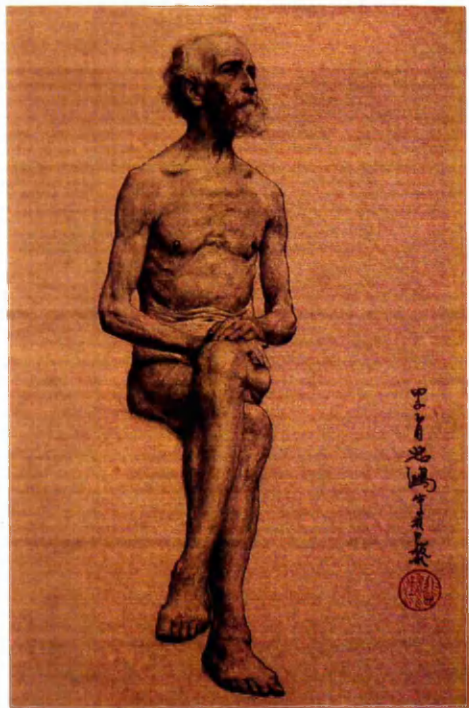




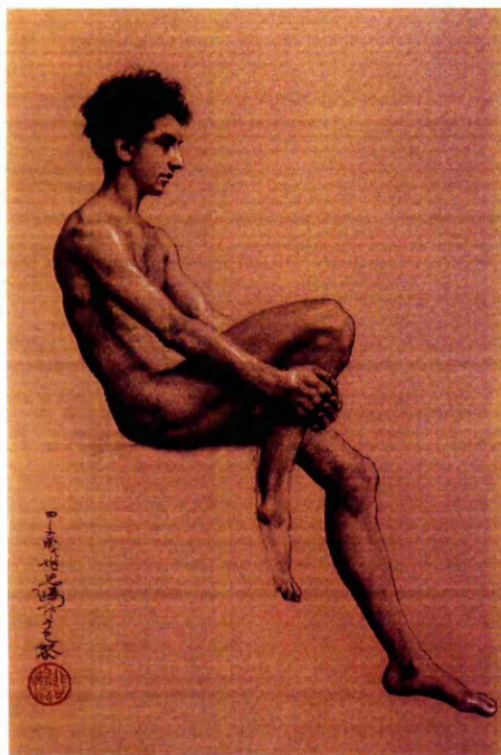
Left: Fig. 103 Xu Beihong, 'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1921



Right: Fig. 104 Xu Beihong, 'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1922



Left: Fig. 105 Xu Beihong, 'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1924



Right: Fig. 106 Xu Beihong, 'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1924





Left: Fig. 107 Xu Beihong, 'Male Nude' (*Nanrenti* 男人體), 1926



Right: Fig. 108 Paul Richer, Photograph of 'Male Morphology'



Left: Fig. 109 Paul Richer, Photograph of 'Female Morphology'



Right: Fig. 110 Paul Richer, Photograph of 'Female Morphology'



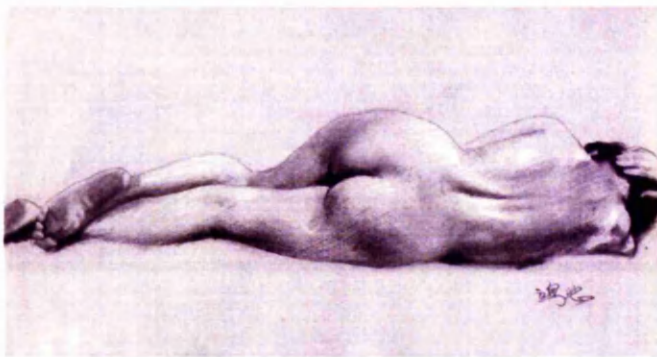


Fig. 111 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1920s



Left: Fig. 112 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Right: Fig. 116 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1920s



Left: Fig. 113 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Middle: Fig. 114 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924

Right: Figure 115 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude from Back' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1924



Left: Fig. 117 Léon-Augustin L'Hermitte, 'Paying the Harvesters', 1882



Right: Fig. 118 Albert Besnard, 'Peace through Arbitration', 1912



Left: Fig. 119 Clémentine-Hélène Dufau, 'Portrait of the Artist', 1911



Right: Fig. 120 Jules Bastien-Lepage, 'Potato Gatherers', 1879





Left: Fig. 121 Auguste Rodin, 'The Burghers of Calais', ca 1889

Right Fig. 122 Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, 'The Poor Fisherman', 1881



Fig. 123 Dagnan-Bouveret, 'Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus', 1896-1897



Fig. 124 Photographs of Anne-Marie and Jean Dagnan, ca 1896



Left: Fig. 125 John Singer Sargent, 'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose', 1885-1886

Right: Fig. 126 Gustave Courbet, 'The Meeting', 1854



Left: Fig. 127 Gustave Courbet, 'The Spring', 1868

Right: Fig. 128 Édouard Manet, 'Olympia', 1863



Fig. 129 Titian, 'Venus of Urbino', 1538





Left: Fig. 130 News about Xu Beihong in *Shibao* 時報 on 3 March 1926



Right: Fig. 131 Xu Beihong, 'Rooster'



Left: Fig. 132 Ni Yide, 'Dock' (*Matou* 碼頭), 1929



Right: Fig. 133 Feng Zikai, 'Reading by the Window', ca 1940



Left: Fig. 134 Xu Beihong, 'Honeymoon' (*Miyue* 蜜月), 1925

Right: Fig. 135 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Jiang Biwei' (*Jiang Biwei zhenying* 蔣碧薇真影), 1925



Fig. 136 Xu Beihong, 'Petting the Cat' (*Fumao* 撫貓), 1924



Fig. 137 (Left) Photograph of Xu Beihong with his oil portrait of Kang Youwei  
(Right) 'Portrait of Kang Youwei', 1920s





Left: Fig. 138 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Ren Bonian' (*Ren Bonian xiang* 任伯年像), 1927

Right: Fig. 139 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Poet Chen Sanyuan'

(*Shiren Chen Sanyuan xiang* 詩人陳散原像), 1927-1930

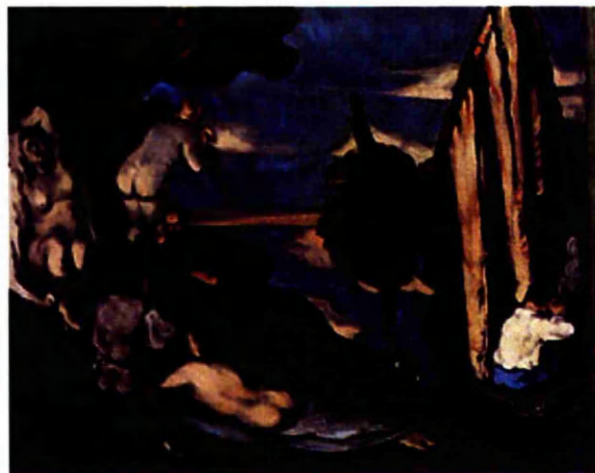


Left: Fig. 140 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Poet Chen Sanyuan'

(*Sanyuan qianbei shiren* 散原前輩詩人), 1928



Right: Fig. 141 Photograph of 'Painter Xu Beihong'



Left: Fig. 142 Wu Changshuo, 'Spring Offerings', 1919

Right: Fig. 143 Paul Cézanne, 'Pastoral' (*Pastorale*), 1870

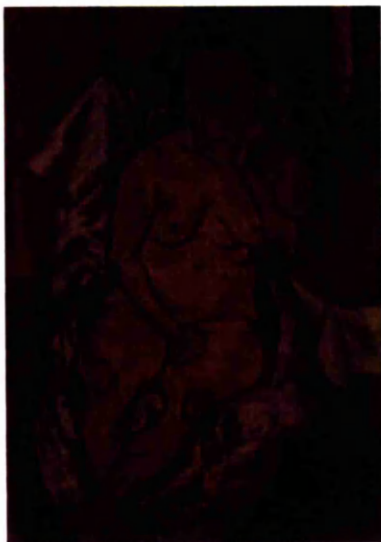


Left: Fig. 144 Pan Yuliang, 'Looking at My Reflection in the Mirror' (*Guying* 顧影), undated

Right: Fig. 145 Li Yishi, 'Representation of the Song of Everlasting Sorrow'

(*Changhenge huayi* 長恨歌畫意), 1929





Left: Fig. 146 Yorozu Tetsugoro, 'Nude (Resting Her Chin on Her Hand)' (*Rahu* 裸婦), 1926

Right: Fig. 147 Liu Haisu, 'The Qingliang Tableland in Yellow Mountain'

(*Huangshan Qingliangtai* 黄山清凉台), 1954



Left: Fig. 148 Shi Tao, 'Clouds and Mountains' (*Yunshan tu* 雲山圖), undated

Right: Fig. 149 Anders Zorn, 'Our Daily Bread', 1886



Left: Fig. 150 Wu Dayu, 'Girl' (*Nühai* 女孩), 1920s



Right: Fig. 151 Cai Weilian, 'Self-Portrait' (*Ziji xiezhao* 自己寫照), 1920s

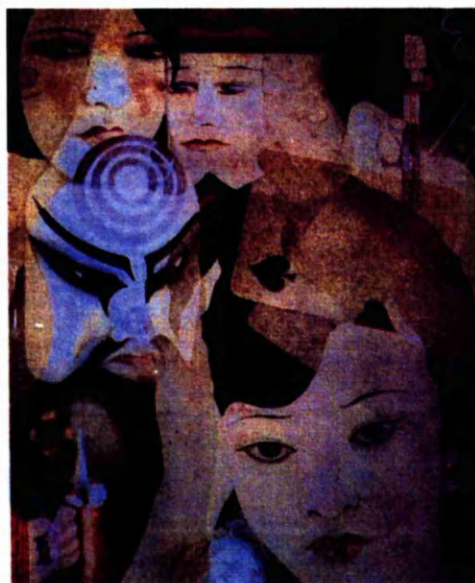
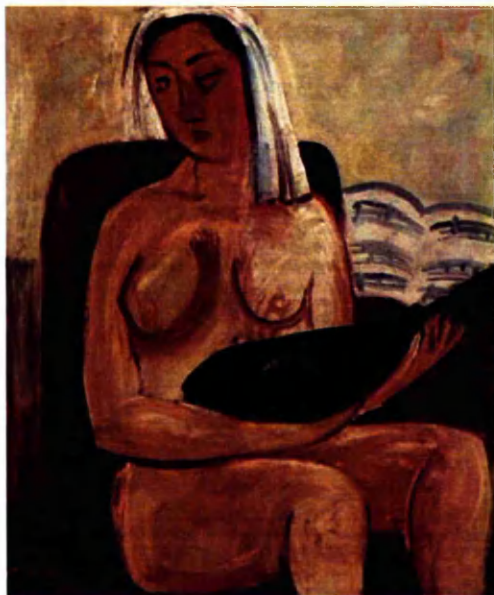


Left: Fig. 152 Xi Beihong, 'Playing Flute' (*Xiaosheng* 蕭聲), 1926



Right: Fig. 153 Xu Beihong, 'Portrait of Zhang Ji' (*Zhangji xiang* 張繼像), 1928





Left: Fig. 154 Ding Yanyong, 'Naked Woman Holding a Lute'

(*Baoqin de nürenti* 抱琴的女人體), 1943

Right: Fig. 155 Pang Xunqin, 'Life's Riddle' (*Rensheng de yami* 人生的啞謎), 1931



Fig. 156 Xu Beihong, 'Awaiting the Deliverer' (*Xiwohou* 徯我后), 1930-1933



Fig. 157 Xu Beihong, 'Poetic Expression of People in the Six Periods'

(*Liuchaoren shiyi tu* 六朝人詩意圖), 1939



Left: Fig. 158 Xu Beihong, 'Shu Liang He' (叔梁紇), 1931



Right: Fig. 161 Xu Beihong, 'The Heroine Jing Thirteen' (Jing Shisanniang 荆十三娘), 1938



Fig. 159 Xu Beihong, 'The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain'  
(Yugong yishan 愚公移山), 1940



Fig. 160 Xu Beihong, 'The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain'  
(Yugong yishan 愚公移山), 1940





Fig. 162 Dagnan-Bouveret, 'The Accident', 1879



Fig. 163 Eugène Delacroix, Scene from 'The Massacre at Chios', 1824



Left: Fig. 164 Xu Beihong, 'Jiufang Gao' (*Jiufang Gao* 九方皋), 1927



Right: Fig. 165 Xu Beihong, Drawing in the Preparation of *Jiufang Gao*, undated



Left: Fig. 166 Théobald Chartran, 'The Sack of Rome by the Gauls', 1877



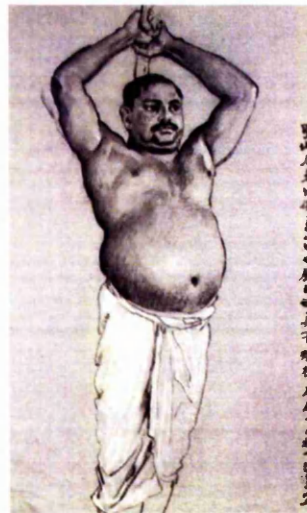
Right: Fig. 168 Xu Beihong, 'Horse and Groom' (*Ma yu mafu* 馬與馬伕), early-dated



Fig. 167 Xu Beihong, 'Qin Qiong Selling His Horse' (*Qin Qiong maima* 秦瓊賣馬). undated



Left: Fig. 169 Xu Beihong, 'Indian Man' (*Yindu nanzi* 印度男子), 1940



Right: Fig. 170 Xu Beihong, Drawing in the Preparation of *The Foolish Old Man Moving the Mountain* (*Wei Yugong yishan zuo de xizuo* 爲愚公移山作的習作), 1940





Fig. 171 Xu Beihong, 'Female Nude' (*Nürenti* 女人體), 1926



Fig. 172 Xu Beihong, 'Morning Song' (*Chenqu* 晨曲), 1936



Left: Fig. 173 Xu Beihong, 'Wounded Lion' (*Fushang zhi shi* 負傷之獅), 1938



Right: Fig. 174 Xu Beihong, 'Join Forces in the Eastern Capital' (*Huishi Dongjing* 會師東京), 1943



Left: Fig. 175 Xu Beihong, 'Horse Grazing' (*Shishu* 食黍), 1943



Right: Fig. 176 Xu Beihong, 'Heroic Memory' (*Zhuanglie de huiyi* 壯烈的回憶), 1937



Left: Fig. 177 Xu Beihong, 'Rumination' (*Chenyin* 沉吟), 1932



Right: Fig. 178 Xu Beihong, 'Rumination' (*Chenyin* 沉吟), 1936



Fig. 179 Xu Beihong, 'Running Horse' (*Benma* 奔馬), 1938





Left: Fig. 180 Xu Beihong and Qi Baishi, 'Gamecocks' (*Douji* 鬥雞), 1947

Right: Fig. 181 Xu Beihong and Wang Yachen, 'Cat and Goldfishes'

(*Mao shi jinyu* 貓石金魚), 1946



Left: Fig.182 Chen Hongshou 'Instructing Girl Pupils in the Arts'(*Shoutu tu* 授徒圖) ca1649

Right: Fig. 183 'Gains from Hunting and Reaping' (*Geyi shouhuo tu* 戈射收穫圖), 25-220





Left: Fig.184 Xu Beihong 'Phoenix Tree, Cat and Butterfly' (*Wutong mao die* 梧桐貓蝶) 1942

Middle: Fig. 185 Ren Bonian, 'Cats Playing under the Shade of Banana Palms'

(*Jiaoyin maoxi tu* 蕉蔭貓戲圖), 1882

Right: Fig. 186 Xu Beihong, 'Muddle' (*Manhan* 顛預), 1934



Left: Fig. 187 Xu Beihong, 'Magpies' (*Shuangque tu* 雙鵲圖), 1942

Right: Fig. 188 Zhao Ji, 'Finches and Bamboo' (*Zhuqin tu* 竹禽圖), undated





Left: Fig. 189 Ren Bonian, 'Mynas Singing Spring' (*Youniao mingchun* 幽鳥鳴春), 1886

Right: Fig. 190 Xu Beihong, 'Plum Blossom' (*Shuying* 疏影), 1943



Left: Fig. 191 Xu Beihong, 'Ink Pine' (*Mosong* 墨松), 1935

Right: Fig. 192 Wen Zhengming, 'Zither and Crane' (*Qin he tu* 琴鶴圖), undated



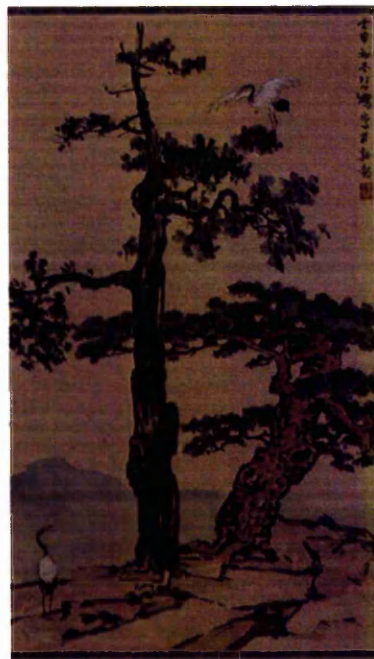
Fig. 193 Xu Beihong, 'Pine and Cranes' (*Song he tu* 松鶴圖), undated



Fig. 194 Lang Shining and Tang Dai, 'Pine and Cranes' (*Song he tu* 松鶴圖), undated



Left: Fig. 195 Xu Beihong, 'Pine and Cranes' (*Shuanghe* 雙鶴), 1938



Right: Fig. 196 Xu Beihong, 'Pine, Cypress and Two Cranes' (*Songbo shuanghe tu* 松柏雙鶴圖), 1932





Left: Fig. 197 Xu Beihong, 'On Hearing the News of Taking Over Nanjing at the Assembly for World Peace' (*Zai Shijie heping dahui shang tingdao Nanjing jiefang xiaoxi* 在世界和平大會聽到南京解放消息), 1949

Right: Fig. 198 Jacques-Louis David, 'The Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon I and the Crowning of the Empress Joséphine in Notre-Dame Cathedral on December 2, 1804' 1806-7



Left: Fig. 199 Xu Beihong, 'Drawing of Leader Ma in the Preparation of 'Leader Mao with His People' (*Mao Zhuxi zai renmin zhong huagao* 毛主席在人民中畫稿), 1950

Right: Fig. 200 Xu Beihong, 'Drawing of Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai' (*Lu Xun yu Qu Qiubai huagao* 魯迅與瞿秋白畫稿), 1952